

# Intention(ality) and the conceptualization of communication in pragmatics

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## Abstract

It is commonly assumed in (linguistic) pragmatics that communication involves speakers expressing their intentions through verbal and nonverbal means, and recipients recognizing or attributing those intentions to speakers. Upon closer examination of various pragmatic phenomena in discourse, however, it appears the situation is actually much more complex than the standard conceptualization of communication in pragmatics allows. In particular, it is suggested in this paper that the focus on expressing and recognizing/attributing (speaker) intentions underestimates the dynamic nature and complexity of cognition that underpins interaction. The notion of “dyadic cognizing” (Arundale and Good 2002; Arundale 2008) is thus introduced as a way of reconceptualizing the inferential work that underlies communication. It is suggested that such inferential work is “directed” and thus is inherently “intentional” in the sense proposed by Brentano, but need not necessarily be “directed” towards the “intentions” of speakers.

**Keywords:** communication, pragmatics, conversation analysis, intention, intentionality, interactional achievement

## 1. Introduction

The analysis of the use of language in communicative situations is seen as core business in pragmatics. Assumptions made about how we might best conceptualize communication are thus crucial to much of the research that has been carried out in pragmatics over the past forty years. While the field of pragmatics encompasses a diverse range of approaches to language use, much of the research can be aligned with two fairly broad traditions: cognitive-philosophical pragmatics (alternatively known as linguistic pragmatics or so-called Anglo-American pragmatics), and sociocultural-interactive pragmatics (or so-called European-Continental pragmatics).

The first broad research tradition in pragmatics, which is founded on the seminal work of Grice (1967[1989], 1975), is the one most likely to be familiar to linguists, as it conceives of pragmatics as being “a core component of a theory of language, on par with phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics” (Huang 2007: 4). In cognitive-philosophical pragmatics, *speaker meaning* is claimed as the central concern of pragmatics. Speaker meaning is defined as arising from speakers expressing intentions through what they say, and recipients recognizing or attributing those intentions to speakers. The importance of intention in the cognitive-philosophical tradition in pragmatics can be traced back directly to Grice’s (1957) seminal work on (speaker) meaning. Grice argued that a speaker meant<sub>NN</sub> something by *x* if and only if S “intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention” (Grice 1957: 385). This crucial insight - or variants thereof - has been carried into research on deixis, presupposition, implicature, and speech acts, as well as politeness and other phenomena of interest in pragmatics. The notion of intention thus lies at the core of most definitions of speaker meaning prevalent in pragmatics to date. However, while Grice’s program was focused on developing an intention-based theory of meaning

(among other things), a move was made fairly early on in the development of the field of pragmatics, perhaps not necessarily intended by Grice himself (Arundale 2008: 237), to equate speaker meaning with communication.

The conceptualization of communication as the expression and recognition/attribution of speaker intentions underlies much of the theorizing in Gricean and neo-Gricean pragmatics (Bach and Harnish 1979: 3; Bach 2004: 470; Dascal 2003: 22-23; Grice 1967[1989]; Horn 2004: 3; Jaszczolt 2002: 249; Levinson 1983: 16-18, 2000: 12-13, 2006a: 87, 2006b: 49), Relevance Theory (Carston 2002: 377; Sperber and Wilson 1995: 194-195), Speech Act Theory (Searle 1969, 1975), and Expression Theory (Davis 2003: 90) among others. This assumption is also, not surprisingly, reflected in the conceptualizations of communication that appear in many of the leading textbooks in pragmatics (see also Curnow this volume for a similar trend for introductory textbooks in linguistics). Thus, while there are important differences in how speaker intentions are conceptualized and what constraints there are on the inferential processes leading to recipients attributing those intentions to speakers, communication is assumed to be crucially dependent on such intentions in cognitive-philosophical pragmatics.

In sociocultural-interactional pragmatics, however, which can be broadly defined as “a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behaviour” (Verschueren 1999: 7), or alternatively as “the study of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society” (Mey 2001: 6), the place of intention in the conceptualization of communication is less clear-cut. On the one hand, it is often claimed that the study of communication is not exhausted by the expression and recognition/attribution of intentions, and pragmatics should encompass research into social and cultural constraints on language use as well (Marmaridou 2000: 219; Verschueren 1999: 164). On the one hand, speaker intentions still remain in some form at the heart of conceptualizations of communication that underpin such research (Lo Castro 2003: 48; Mey 2001: 85). It appears, then, that while the role intention itself plays is somewhat equivocal in sociocultural-interactional pragmatics, intentions are still seen as playing at least some role in the prevailing conceptualization of communication.

One of the most important assumptions made about communication in pragmatics has thus been the claim that it involves speakers expressing their intentions through verbal and nonverbal means, and recipients attributing intentions to those speakers, a view that is consistent with folk conceptualizations of *communication* amongst English speakers (Goddard this volume).<sup>1</sup> While this claim has reached an almost axiomatic status in pragmatics, it is argued in this paper that the place of intention in the conceptualization of communication underlying much research in pragmatics is much more controversial than is for the most part allowed (see also Haugh 2008a). In particular, it is suggested the commonly held view that communication involves recipients “correctly” making inferences about the speaker’s intentions underestimates the complexity of cognizing that underlies interaction. This does not amount to the claim that speakers do not at times have particular motivations or plans underlying what they are saying, or that recipients do not at times make inferences about what

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<sup>1</sup> While both spoken and written forms of communication are examined in pragmatics, there is arguably still a bias in pragmatics theorizing towards treating spoken interaction as the primary or unmarked form of communication (Cooren 2008), a bias also evident in other disciplines such as second language acquisition (Eisenclas this volume). For the sake of simplicity, the terms speaker and recipient will continue to be used throughout this paper, although this of course does not do justice to much of the important work done on the writer-reader dynamic in pragmatics.

has motivated the speaker to say something. There is a large volume of work in pragmatics, as well as in the cognitive sciences and related disciplines, to suggest that such inferential work does indeed occur. The question is whether such inferential work, located in the minds of individuals, is *sufficient* to account for the kinds of communicative phenomena that are analyzed in pragmatics.

In this paper, after giving a brief overview of the ways in which communication is conceptualized in pragmatics, the epistemological and ontological ambiguities that arise as a consequence of reducing communication to intention recognition/attribution are discussed. An alternative approach to cognition, which is argued to be more consistent with the view of communication as an interactional achievement (Nevile and Rendle-Short this volume), is then proposed. This is followed by a brief consideration of the implications of such a move for the place intention(ality) can still play in the conceptualization of communication in pragmatics research.

## 2. The ambiguity of intentions in interaction

Despite its importance to conceptualizations of communication in cognitive-philosophical pragmatics, and somewhat equivocal status in sociocultural-interactive pragmatics, the conceptualization of the notion of intention itself is rarely commented upon in the pragmatics literature (Haugh 2008a). An analysis of implicit assumptions made about intention in analysing communication, however, reveals that it is invariably conceptualized as an *a priori*, conscious mental state of individual speakers (Gibbs 1999: 23, 2001: 106; Mann 2003: 165).

If one considers the manner in which implicatures, for instance, arise in actual discourse though, the picture becomes somewhat more complex. In the next example, an implied request appears to arise.

(1)

- 1 A: Hullo I was wondering whether you were intending to go to Popper's talk this afternoon
- 2 B: Not today I'm afraid I can't make it to this one
- 3 A: Ah okay
- 4 B: You wanted me to record it didn't you heh!
- 5 A: Yeah heheh
- 6 B: Heheh no I'm sorry about that... (Levinson 1983: 358)

It appears at first glance that A's first utterance in lines 1-2 can be interpreted as a pre-request (Levinson 1983: 358), where a pre-request is broadly defined as a question checking whether some precondition obtains for the request to be performed in a subsequent utterance by the speaker (Levinson 1983: 346). In this interaction, the pre-request in line 1 involves explicit reference to B's *intentions* (that is, B's future plans) in relation to (Karl) Popper's talk. However, B's response in line 2 indicates a specific precondition relevant to A's request, namely attending Popper's talk that afternoon, is not being met by B, and thus the projected request is no longer viable. The interaction continues when B suggests in line 4 that A was *intending* to ask B to record the talk, and thus makes explicit reference to A's (higher-order) intentions (that is, what A wanted to achieve by asking this question). A goes on to admit as much in line 5, and B responds in line 6 by apologizing for not being able to comply with A's request.

According to the received view, this implicature is generated through recognition by the recipient of the speaker's intention to imply a request. For instance, according to a Gricean account it is just by B recognising that A intended B to recognise that A is asking B to record the lecture that a (particularised) implicature arises (cf. Grice 1957: 385), while according to a Relevance theoretic account it is just by B recognising that A has the (communicative) intention to make it mutually manifest that A has the (informative) intention to let B know he is asking B to record the lecture that an implicature is ostensively communicated (cf. Sperber and Wilson 1995: 29).

A key problem with such an explanation, however, is that it potentially gives rise to ontological ambiguity in regards to the analysts' understanding of what is communicated vis-à-vis the participants (Arundale 2008: 240-241; Bilmes 1986; Haugh 2008c: 52; Potter 2006: 135). The circularity arises for conceptualizations of communication where "an analysts claims that talk shows evidence for a particular psychological state or process" and then goes on to "explain the production of that talk in terms of the existence of [that particular psychological state or process]" (Antaki, Billig, Edwards and Potter 2003: 13-14). In relation to intentions, then, it is potentially circular to treat this possible pre-request as evidence of the speaker's intention to make a request, and then go on to explicate this implied request in terms of those intentions (cf. Potter 2006: 135-136).

In other words, the assumption that this interaction involves B working out A's intentions actually masks a number of complex epistemological and ontological questions:

- (1) where exactly can this intention be located in the discourse?
- (2) who exactly can be held responsible for this intention?
- (3) just how (consciously) aware are the interactants of this intention?

It is evident from this interaction, then, that an implicature has arisen. While A did not actually literally make a request at any point, it is apparent that both A and B understand a request was made, and thus something has been implied in addition to what has literally been said (Haugh 2002, 2007). But when exactly does this implicature arise? There is not sufficient evidence in this interaction to definitively conclude that B inferred that A was requesting him to make a recording of Popper's talk during or after A's initial question in line 1. B responds only to what has been *said* by A in line 2, and while this is *in effect* a "blocking response" to the pre-request (Liddicoat 2007: 132-133; Schegloff 2007: 90), we cannot be sure that B understood A's question as a pre-request at this point in the interaction. A responds in line 3 with an "ah" particle that orients towards B's response as informing him of something he did not know before (Heritage 1984b; Liddicoat 2007: 152; Schegloff 2007: 118), followed by marker "okay" which displays acceptance of the stance embodied in B's response, in this case a "dispreferred second" that indicates possible closure of the pre-request sequence (Liddicoat 2007: 155; Schegloff 2007: 121). Following on from this projected closure, B re-opens the sequence in line 4 by then going on to make a metapragmatic comment about A's underlying *intentions*. It is only at this point that we have unequivocal evidence that B has indeed interpreted A's initial question in line 1 as implying a request, and so we might conclude that B made this inference in response to A's attempted closure of the possible pre-request sequence. But this conclusion is not necessarily warranted either, since the utterance type found in line 1, where A initially asks B about his plans in relation to Popper's talk, appears

frequently enough in English for it to be possible for B to anticipate that A might be planning to ask something of him (Levinson 1983; Liddicoat 2007: 133). B may therefore have guessed about A's intentions to make a request fairly soon after processing A's utterance in line 1. It is consequently difficult indeed to pin down exactly when or where this implicature, and so B's possible inferences about A's intentions, arises in this sequence. The difficulties experienced in trying to locate *a priori* intentions in interactional data suggests that there is in fact often temporal ambiguity in relation to the process of intention formation and recognition/attribution that is assumed to underlie communication (Drew 2005; Haugh 2008b, 2008c; Heritage 1990/91; Hopper 2005).

Another layer of ontological ambiguity also exists in regards to how recipients know the intentions of speakers, and in particular, whether we are really talking about the speaker's intentions or the intentions attributed to the speaker by the recipient. The intention-attribution model of communication privileges the speaker's intention in determining what is communicated, yet in this interaction the work of "communicating" this implicature was done not only by A but also by B. In this sense, A can no longer be held entirely responsible for this particular implied request. This is not to deny that A may have had some *a priori* mental construct inside his mind before making the utterance in line 1, but in regards to what is communicated, it is not this *a priori* mental construct that appears to be most salient, but rather interactionally achieved participant understandings of what was implied. More generally, various studies have indicated that how what is said, implied and so on is understood by recipients is just as important as what speakers might have intended in regards to what is communicated (Arundale 1999; Bilmes 1993; Cooren 2005; Haugh 2007, 2008b; Sbisà 1992). Moreover, as Arundale (2008) points out, an intention-attribution model of communication "fails to address how the participants themselves could come know whether the recipient's inference and attribution regarding that [speaker's] intention is any extent consistent with it" (p.241). The conceptualization of communication in terms of (speaker) intentions thus suffers from potential circularity in that recipients can only know what speakers intend to communicate if they know what others would see those recipients as communicating, yet what others would see the speaker as communicating is no more transparent to the hearer than what the speaker him/herself might have intended to communicate (Bilmes 1986: 110; cf. Haugh 2008c: 51-52).

Finally, there is also epistemological ambiguity as to the status of the intention(s) involved in this interaction. Are either A or B, for example, consciously aware of an intention on the part of A in uttering "ah okay" in line 3 to either project closure of the pre-request sequence, or alternatively to hint that there is more to the interaction than has been said? Where there is clear evidence that the interactants are (consciously) aware of the existence of intentions in the course of this interaction, this is only because *intention* has been referred to (line 1), topicalized (line 4) or ratified (line 5). Rather than involving Gricean or Relevance theoretic intentions, then, the participants appear to be referring to other senses of the folk notion of *intention*. As Gibbs (1999: 22-23) points out, *intention* encompasses multiple, interdependent senses: (1) expressing future plans of self, (2) ascribing to or asking of others their future plans, (3) describing what oneself or others want to achieve by doing or saying something, and (4) classifying actions as being done with the speaker's awareness of the implications of them. In this particular interaction, we can find reference to sense (2) of *intention* in line 1, and reference to sense (3) in line 5. More importantly, we can see that B makes explicit reference to *intention* in line 5 in order to hold A

accountable for both what he has said and what is (allegedly) implied. In other words, referring to or topicalizing *intention* is a discursive means of holding speakers accountable for what is communicated (Bonaiuto and Fasulo 1997: 533; Edwards 2006, 2008; Haugh 2008b, 2008c; Heritage 1988; Schegloff 1991).

The ambiguity surrounding intentions in interaction that has been discussed in this section points to the ways in which meaning(s) emerge in communication (see also Nevile and Rendle-Short this volume). Such a discussion might appear to favour sociocultural-interactional accounts of communication in pragmatics. However, to point towards the complexity inherent in the inferential work underlying communication “should not be taken to mean that we do not end up considering what the speaker’s actual inner state was” (Sanders 2005: 63). While those working in the related field of conversation analysis, for instance, may remain somewhat “agnostic” as to questions of intention and cognition (Drew 1995: 135; Heritage 1990/91: 329; Hopper 2005: 149; Mandelbaum and Pomerantz 1991: 163; Pomerantz 1990/91; Potter 2006: 138), for those working in pragmatics the question still remains “whether it is possible to develop a theoretical framework for pragmatic analysis that can account for both the social grounding of language use and its cognitive structure” (Marmaridou 2000: 39). In other words, an approach to communication that combines “cognitive” and “interactional” paradigms (Gibbs 1999: 45). In the following section, it is suggested that it is not what is going on inside the “minds” of these interactants per se that is necessarily crucial, but rather the dynamic inter-relationship between cognizing and interaction that proves most salient.

### **3. Cognizing in interaction**

The conceptualization of communication as being emergent or interactionally achieved has at least two important implications for how we analyse the inferencing that presumably underlies implicatures, presuppositions, speech acts and other pragmatic phenomena in communication. The first is that such inferencing is always *contingent*. This intuition has been commonly represented in pragmatics through the claim that such inferences are defeasible (or alternatively cancellable or suspendable) (Bach 2006; Blome-Tillmann 2008; Burton-Roberts 2006; Grice 1967[1989]: 44; Levinson 2000: 15; Sadock 1978). However, there is evidence to suggest that many inferences are neither explicitly deniable nor implicitly suspendable through the addition of contextual information (Carston 2002: 138-139; Haugh 2008d; Weiner 2006). It is thus suggested here that the emergence of meaning through communication, and so the contingency of the inferential work underlying pragmatic phenomena, is more productively understood in terms of anticipatory and retroactive inferencing (Arundale 2008; Arundale and Good 2002; Good 1995).

Each participant’s processing in using language involves a set of concurrent cognitive operations that are temporally extended, not only forward in time in recipient design of their own utterances and in anticipation of other’s talk...but also backwards in time in the retroactive assessing of interpretations of what has already been producing in their own and in other’s utterance. (Arundale and Good 2002: 135)

In other words, the cognizing underlying communication is contingent because both speakers and recipients are simultaneously engaged in anticipatory and retroactive inferencing in producing and comprehending utterances.

In the following excerpt from an interview between the researcher (MH) and an elderly New Zealand woman (MP) about communication styles in New Zealand English at her house, for instance, we can find indications of *retroactive inferencing*.

(2) (MH, a researcher, is visiting MP who is his old music teacher)<sup>2</sup>

- 1 MP: have a biscuit.  
2 MH: ↑o:h okay↑ yeah. ↑thank you.  
3 MP: you've gotta have a (.) bi↓kkie=  
4 MH: =hava squiggle=  
5 MP: =they're lovely squiggles.  
6 MH: I love squiggles.  
7 MP: mm.  
8 MH: ye:ah. hhh.  
9 (0.6)  
10 MP: ((while eating)) oh.  
11 (0.8)  
12 MH: [°mm°  
13 MP: [I don't have got any bread 'n butter  
plates but (0.4) there's one in the  
cupboard if you want one.  
14 MH: Mm? o::h should be okay.  
15 I'll ju-  
16 MP: you [alright?]  
17 MH: [do ya ] did you want one?  
18 MP: yea- (.) well it is less messier  
actually=  
19 MH: =okay.  
20 MP: u:m. on the bottom shelf,  
21 MH: mhm.  
22 MP: just above the stove.

In lines 1-8 we see that MP offers MH a biscuit to eat and that both then subsequently start eating the biscuits. The interaction then moves to the issue of a plate for the biscuits in lines 10-13 (which were offered directly from a container). In particular, we can see from MH's response in line 14, where he makes a declination, that he has interpreted MP's utterance in line 13 as an offer. In other words, he has inferred at this moment in the interaction that MP would like him to go and get a plate *if he so desires*. This is evident from his response where he indicates that a plate is not necessary, thereby presupposing an offer has been made. In line 16, however, the continuation of MH's speaking turn (line 15) is cut short by MP who wants to confirm whether MH is indeed satisfied with the present situation (i.e., without a plate). This overlaps with MH's offer to get a plate for MP to eat upon (line 17), and, crucially, is followed by MP's acceptance of MH's offer in line 18. It turns out that MP's "offer" in line 13 may really have been an indirect request as well, namely for MH to get a plate for MP. This latter utterance may have led to a retroactive reassessing by MH (and possibly by MP) of MP's utterance in line 13 as being an implied request, as well as or instead of an offer. Further evidence of the need for a re-interpreting of what was implied by MP in line 13 comes from the appearance of the attitudinal adverbial, *actually*, in line 18. This frames the claim that using a plate is "less messier [*sic.*]" as a metapragmatic comment on what has previously passed, namely MH's initial refusal to get a plate in lines 14-15. In this case, then, we can see how inferencing can be retrospective in that it involves a reassessment of what had been previously inferred. This retroactive reassessment of a previous inference is not simply a matter of a

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<sup>2</sup> A list of transcription symbols can be found at the end of this paper.

miscommunicated “intention,” however, as it is not clear whether MP even any had such “intention” prior to her utterance in line 13. Instead, it involves a subtle negotiation over the course of a number of utterances of the meaning of MP’s utterance, transforming it from a straightforward offer into a much more equivocal speech act, where an indirect request is a possible additional interpreting.

Inferencing is not only directed retroactively, however, but may also be oriented in anticipation of what is coming in an interaction (Haugh 2003). Co-construction, where one’s utterance is “finished” by someone else (Goodwin 1979, 1995; Hayashi 1999; Jacoby and Ochs 1995), or where a common stance is achieved by more than one participant, for instance, constitutes evidence that participants (can) engage in *anticipatory inferencing* in communication. In the following excerpt, knowledge of a common idiomatic expression, “lay back and think of England”, allows one friend to “finish” the other’s utterance.

(3) (Two friends are talking at university about the foul-tasting coffee they are drinking, J is male, L is female) (ICE-AUS, S1A-020)<sup>3</sup>

1 J: [just ] (.)  
           lay back and think of  
 2 (0.4)  
 3 L: England (0.4) as I al(hh)ways [do.  
 4 J: [ (1-  
           Hhh.  
 5 L: He he.

In line 3, we can see that L “finishes” J’s utterance which started in line 1 after a brief pause (line 2), which indicates that perhaps J’s attention has shifted from what he saying or alternatively that he is having trouble recalling the end of the idiom. In this context the idiom means that they will just have to suffer the bad coffee in stoical silence. In other words, L has prospectively inferred that J will say “England” to complete the idiom, and does so before he says it.

In the next excerpt, however, we can see that “anticipating” what others are going to say is not restricted to formulaic or idiomatic expressions. The way in which these three university students co-construct a common stance in regards what it is like living in a college dormitory is also indicative of the practice of anticipatory inferencing in communication.

(4) (Three young university students are talking at their dormitory, A is female, B and C are males) (ICE-AUS, S1A-029)

1 A: it's re:ally difficult 'cos it's a  
           inbetween time °and you've got°  
 2 (2.0)  
 3 A: [s-  
 4 B: [and you've got ha:lf your stuff down  
           here and ha:lf your stuff at ho:me [and]  
 5 A: [an']  
 6 B: you've never quite got a complete>  
           s(hh)et he.  
 7 A: and you go ho:me and you're sort of always  
           waiting (0.3) to [go back] and like (.)  
 8 B: [mm he ]

<sup>3</sup> Examples 3-5 are taken from the Australian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE) held at Macquarie University. I would like to thank Pam Peters and Adam Smith for allowing me access to sound files in this corpus for the purpose of close transcription.



9 A: you have >to sort of< get yourself packed up.  
 10 C: but when you're in college  
 [you]'re waiting to go home  
 11 A: [bu-]  
 12 B: [ha ha [ha ha]  
 13 C: [ha ha  
 14 A: [HA HA [when] y(hh)ou're in college you're  
 waiting to go home. Exactly.

The stance in this excerpt is contributed to by all three students. A's utterance about the difficulties one has in living between places in line 1 is picked up by B in lines 4-6, for instance. Here B repeats the last three words of A's previous turn in his speaking turn and thereby "completes" the stance initiated by A in claiming the difficulty in question relates to not having all one's possessions in one place. Another difficulty arising from living in a dormitory, namely, the feeling of always wanting to return to the dormitory when one goes home, is raised by A in lines 7 and 9, and this is immediately followed by C's comment in line 10 that, on the other hand, when one is at the dormitory one is also always waiting to go home. In doing so, speakers A and C co-construct the contradictory feelings they have when living in the dormitory, and this contradiction gives rise to laughter. A's endorsement of C's anticipation of what she was going to say in line 14 following the laughter also indicates that this related stance was indeed co-constructed. It is important to note that in accounting for the co-construction of this common stance on the difficulties of living "in-between" one's parent's home and a college dormitory, it is plausible to assume that the participants were in some ways anticipating what the others were going to or could say, and so were engaged in prospective inferencing. While it is not certain that B successfully anticipated what A was going to say (lines 4-6), it was allowed to pass by A thereby displaying implicit agreement with B's inference. A's endorsement in line 13 of C's preceding utterance, on the other hand, displays an understanding that C's verbalisation of the prospective inferences he had been making in relation to what A was saying in lines 6 and 8 was consistent with what she might have wanted or been expected to say.

The verbalisation of anticipatory inferences is also apparent in the following excerpt where the two students co-construct a joke about C's dentist.

(5) (Two male students chatting) (ICE-AUS, S1A-024)

1 M: bet he gets you if he has to do any work.  
 2 (2.3)  
 3 C: ye::ah but he- (.) he's the sort of guy  
 who w:on't do work unless there's  
 work to be done.  
 4 M: mm.  
 5 C: you know how with some they'll give you  
 a fluori:de an[d um  
 6 M: [chip your teeth away (.)  
 and then tell you they've gotta cap 'em.  
 7 C: [Ha ha [ha ha ha °he he he°  
 8 M: [Ha HA ha ha ha  
 9 (1.0)  
 10 C: °he he°  
 11 (1.0)  
 12 °he he he°  
 13 (1.0)  
 14 M: °pro[b'ly°  
 15 C: [ye:ah.

C has been telling M that his dentist is very good, to which M responds by teasing that C is probably charged a lot for the dentist's services (line 1). C responds in line 3 with a po-faced response (Drew 1987), claiming his dentist will not do any work unless it is really necessary. He goes on to contrast his dentist's practice with others in line 5, but before he finishes this claim, M chimes in to complete it in a humorous way in line 6, and both speakers then laugh. While it is not clear what C might have said if he had finished what he was saying in line 5, M has anticipated what *could* have been said and so co-constructs a common stance about dentists who do unnecessary work with C. This common stance is explicitly endorsed by both M and C in lines 14-15, which indicates that whether or not the anticipatory inference made by M was the same as what C might have "intended", it was accepted by both speakers as a plausible continuation of C's speaking turn. In making prospective inferences, then, it is important to note that it is not necessarily the degree of consistency with what a speaker might have "intended", but rather its degree of plausibility, which can prove crucial.

The second implication of conceptualizing communication as emergent is that such inferencing is inherently *non-summative* (Arundale 1999, 2008; Krippendorf 1970, 1984; Pearce and Cronen 1980; Walzlawick, Beavin and Jackson 1967). Instead of attempting to explain communication in terms of the "the summative pairing of the cognitive processing activities of two separate individuals" (Arundale 2008: 242), it is suggested here that we "explain communication as a non-summative outcome of a single two-person system" (Arundale 2008: 246). Such a move turns on the finding that communication "cannot be reduced without remainder to the level of individual psychological processing" (Arundale 2008: 246), with evidence of this kind of non-summative inferencing emerging, for instance, from analyses of the interactional management of joint attention (Kidwell and Zimmerman 2007), as well as experiments investigating the performance of participants versus over-hearers in understanding discourse (Clark and Schaefer 1987; Schober and Clark 1989). This does not mean that monadic inferencing (i.e., autonomous cognition within the mind of an individual) does not occur, but rather that monadic inferencing is insufficient to account for the complex ways in which meanings emerge through communication.

Goal as a construct located in an individual mind might explain monologue, but even the cleverest and bravest reductionist does not have the alchemy to produce the creative spontaneity of dialogue out of two goals, in separate minds...Mentally driven theories can hypothesize a start to the interaction, but they must also account for the reciprocity and accommodation that characterize face-to-face interaction. Otherwise, the goals of the two individuals would run parallel, never affecting each other. (Bavelas 1991: 22)

The notion of "dyadic cognizing" has thus been proposed by Arundale and Good (2002) as a means of conceptualising the cognitive processes underlying communication in a way that is consistent with a conceptualization of communication as an interactional achievement. Their central claim is that the cognitive processes of participants in conversation are not autonomous but rather are interdependent (Arundale and Good 2002: 127). In other words, rather than being "the summative sequence of individual cognitive activities and/or actions" (*ibid.*: 124), communication involves what they term "dyadic cognizing."

Each participant's cognitive processes in using language involve concurrent operations temporally extended both forward in time in anticipation or projection, and backwards in time in hindsight or retroactive assessing of what has already transpired. As participants interact, these concurrent cognitive activities become fully interdependent or dyadic. (Arundale and Good 2002: 122)

It is thus argued by Arundale and Good (2002) that while autonomous cognitive processes are involved in human interaction, the traditional monadic view of cognition is not able to account for the emergent and non-summative properties of conversation and other forms of talk-in-interaction.

In the following excerpt from a conversation between two Australians meeting for the first time, we can see the way in which inferences from what is said can become interdependent through interaction (cf. Haugh 2008c: 62).

(6) (Emma and Chris are talking about how acupuncture draws on the notion of *chi*)

- 1 E: SO: (0.2) the:y (0.5) they aim to  
learn to understand it [an:d ]=  
2 C: [right]  
3 E: =grow sensitive to it you know,  
I'm like [( )]  
4 C: [yeah ]  
5 (0.6)  
6 C: °mmm°  
7 (0.2)  
8 E: and the needles happen to be one of  
the most effective ways  
to (0.6) manipulate it  
9 C: yeah  
10 E: mmmm  
11 C: can you fix patellar tendonitis? °heh°  
12 (1.7)  
13 E: †maybe †yeah  
14 C: yeah?  
15 (0.3)  
16 E: yeah you got that?  
17 C: I have yeah (0.6) had an operation...

Emma has been talking about how useful acupuncture can be in treating medical conditions up until this point. Chris's question in line 11 thus appears somewhat abruptly as there has been no discursive work that prepares Emma for it. The relatively long pause that follows Chris's question (line 12), before Emma responds in line 13, appears to give her time to consider how to interpret it. On the one hand, Chris's question can be taken as a tease and perhaps a challenge to Emma's medical knowledge as to whether she is familiar with the condition and could treat it. On the other hand, Chris's question can also be taken as an indirect request for help with the condition (more specifically a pre-request) (Levinson 1983; Liddicoat 2007: 132-133). While both interpretations are plausible, it is only the latter which becomes operative when Emma responds with a hedged affirmative in line 13, before asking Chris whether he has this condition in line 16 (eventually leading to an offer of help from Emma later in this conversation).

We do not know whether Emma's interpreting of Chris's question in line 11 is consistent with Chris's own interpreting of what he "meant", as it is not possible to ascertain whether Chris had any particular *a priori* intention in mind when asking

Emma about her ability to treat this condition.<sup>4</sup> What is important to note here instead is that the implicature arises as a consequence of Emma displaying an interpreting of Chris's question as an indirect request (line 13), and Chris's implicit ratification of this interpreting, which is evident from his subsequent response (line 14). Since the implicature is interactionally achieved (or conjointly co-constituted in Arundale's terms), the inferencing underlying this implicature is necessarily interdependent. In uttering the question in line 11, Chris may infer that his question proactively affords at least two interpretations (a tease or an implied request), or perhaps that Emma will infer only one of these. In her response in line 13, Emma displays an understanding that indicates she has inferred the question is potentially implying a request, and so retroactively constrains the utterance to only one interpreting (an implied request).<sup>5</sup> Upon hearing this response, Chris may then infer that Emma has understood the question as a pre-request, and so responds in line 14 with an utterance ratifying Emma's displayed interpreting and thus her inference. In this way, we can see that Chris's and Emma's inferences about what is meant by Chris's question in line 11 are dependent on the other's displays of the inferences they have made. Their inferences thus become fully interdependent through the course of this interaction.

Interdependent inferencing is also apparent in the following excerpt from a telephone conversation between two male university friends who are delicately "negotiating" whether they will do something together on Saturday night.

(7) (Stuart has called Carl on the phone) (WSC, DPF006)<sup>6</sup>

1 C: howdy how?  
 2 (0.6)  
 3 S: hello?  
 4 (0.2)  
 5 C: yeah.  
 6 (0.3)  
 7 S: how are you?  
 8 (0.2)  
 9 C: fine.  
 10 (0.4)  
 11 S: whad've you been up to?  
 12 (0.3)  
 13 C: o::h(hh). (0.2) not much=  
 =I did some sunbathing today  
 but (.) other than that (.)  
 [°not much°]  
 14 S: [e:xcellent] e:h?  
 15 (0.4)  
 16 C: beautiful= [u:m ]  
 17 S: =wh[at a] da:y  
 18 C: ↑yeah=whadaya doing tonight?  
 19 (0.2)  
 20 S: I dun↑no:.. >what are< you gonna do.

<sup>4</sup> As Haugh (2008c: 19-20) notes, asking Chris what he "meant" would not necessarily settle this matter either (cf. Anscombe 1957[1963]: 44, §25), as what Chris might say *post facto* about his "intentions" could only be interpreted in light of how Chris might want to position himself vis-à-vis the researcher and Emma.

<sup>5</sup> Emma's lack of explicit orientation to the tease could also be interpreted as a po-faced response, namely, ignoring the tease (Drew 1987: 228), so the status of Chris's question vis-à-vis teasing ultimately remains equivocal in this interaction.

<sup>6</sup> This example is taken from the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WSC). I would like to thank Bernadette Vine for access to the original sound file for transcription, and Ann Weatherall for the TAG workshop where this example was originally brought to my attention.

21 (0.5)  
 22 C: o:h I've been invited to a party  
 that I don't wanna=really  
 want t' go to.  
 23 (0.6)  
 24 C: hope to find an excuse.  
 25 (0.6)  
 26 S: o:h ↑ri:ght. hh. (0.3) I see.  
 ↑u::m. hav'ya seen lethal weapon?  
 27 (0.5)  
 28 C: yeah I have.  
 29 (0.6)  
 30 S: ↓o:h bugger. (0.2)  
 have you seen patriot games?  
 31 (0.6)  
 32 C: e::r no.  
 33 (0.5)  
 34 S: do you wanna see that?  
 35 (0.5)  
 36 C: ↑yeah.

While in hindsight it appears that Cameron most likely called up Steve with a higher-order intention in mind, namely to try and arrange to do something together on Saturday night, the invitation itself arises through a complex interactional sequence, as ultimately it is Steve who issues the invitation not Cameron. The call begins with greetings (lines 1-9) before Steve, although not the call initiator, asks Cameron what he has been doing (line 11). Cameron responds that he has been sunbathing but not doing much else (line 13). In doing so, they have jointly opened up interactional space for the ensuing discussion of what they are going to do (by talking about what they have been doing). This interactional space is quickly taken up by Cameron who makes a (possible) false start to his new line of questioning in line 16 with his potential topic-shift initiator “um”, which overlaps with Steve’s formulaic or idiomatic response, “what a day”, indicative of the closing of a particular topic sequence (Drew and Holt 1998). Cameron quickly shifts into his question in line 18, asking what Steve is planning for that night. While such a question could be interpreted as simply showing interest in Steve’s activities in response to Steve’s previous display of interest in Cameron’s activities (line 11), it is also interpretable as opening up an invitation sequence (more specifically, a pre-invitation) (Levinson 1983; Liddicoat 2007: 129; Sacks 1992: 529; Schegloff 2007: 129). In other words, Steve may infer that Cameron is possibly thinking about inviting Steve to do something together that night. Steve’s response in line 20 (“I dunno”), however, is equivocal in that it is neither a “go-ahead” nor a “blocking” response, but rather is a hedged orienting towards Cameron’s pre-invitation (Schegloff 2007: 31-32). In doing so, Steve leaves it open as to whether he is potentially interested in doing something together with Cameron. Steve then, in the same line, asks what Cameron is doing, in order to find out more about the possible invitation. In other words, at this point in the sequence Cameron has potentially initiated an invitation sequence with Steve, and Steve has responded by displaying interest in the invitation that is contingent on what it involves. Neither of them, however, have committed themselves to a response that confirms this as an invitation sequence (possibly to avoid looking “desperate” and thereby save self-face and/or to avoid being seen as overly “pushy” and thereby save other-face) (Haugh in press).

Cameron’s subsequent utterance in line 22 does not yet move into an invitation either, as he responds equivocally with a telling of what he has been planning to do

(that is, on the one hand, he has a party to go to which would seem to indicate the invitation sequence cannot proceed, but on the other hand, he is not very interested in going to the party). Crucially, the fact that Cameron's response in line 22 to Steve's inquiry in line 20 is "oh-prefaced" (Heritage 1998: 296) potentially displays an understanding that the inquiry being responded to is problematic in regards to Steve's underlying presupposition, namely that Cameron already has an event in mind to which he wants to invite Steve. This is further developed in Cameron's subsequent utterance in line 24 where he hints that he would like another invitation by saying he is looking for an excuse to get out of going to the party. Thus while a hedged response to a pre-invitation often involves a move to a telling of what the invitation would have been (Drew 1984; Liddicoat 2007: 131; Schegloff 2007: 33), in this sequence it projects an accounting for why the pre-invitation was issued by Cameron.

Steve's subsequent displayed interpreting of Cameron's response (to Steve's inquiry) as an account rather than a telling is evident from the "oh" and "right" which receipt "new" information and understanding respectively on Steve's part in line 26 (Heritage 1984b; Liddicoat 2007: 152; Schegloff 2007: 118). Steve then issues his own pre-invitation in asking whether Cameron has seen "Lethal Weapon". A blocking response in line 28, is followed by Steve issuing another pre-invitation in line 30, which is followed by a go-ahead response in line 32, and finally an invitation to go to see "Patriot Games" (line 34) to which Cameron agrees (line 36).

In this excerpt, then, we can see the interpretation of Cameron's initial question in line 18 as a pre-invitation remains open until at least line 26 when Steve displays an understanding that an invitation to go out together is what they are indeed talking about. While Cameron's question proactively affords an interpreting as a pre-invitation (as well as a straightforward question), both Steve and Cameron display understandings that leave what inferences can be made from Cameron's question open until Cameron begins to constrain the inferences that can be legitimately made from his question in lines 22 and 24. However, instead of straightforwardly preceding into the issuing of the invitation by Cameron, Steve issues his own invitation sequence with a projected pre-invitation in line 26 which eventually leads to Steve inviting Cameron to go to see a movie. In this way, we can see that the inferences both Cameron and Steve make in regards to interpreting Cameron's question in line 18, and crucially, Cameron's response in lines 22-24 to Steve's inquiry, are dependent on the responses the other person makes. In other words, their inferences become interdependent through the interaction as "the participants continually both proactively afford and retroactively constrain one another's comprehending and producing of every utterance" (Arundale and Good 2002: 135).

The existence of this kind of interdependent inferential work is thus consistent with Arundale and Good's (2002) proposal that not only monadic cognition, but also dyadic cognizing underpins communication, as previously discussed. However, such a line of argument draws into question the central place intention is commonly assumed to play in the conceptualization of communication in pragmatics. In the final section, the implications of this move for reconceptualizing communication in pragmatics are thus discussed.

#### **4. Implications for reconceptualizing communication in pragmatics**

In the preceding analysis of interactions there has been an implicit shift away from the traditional conceptualisation of communication in cognitive-philosophical pragmatics as involving the recognition or attribution of intentions to the speaker. This move,

however, should not be taken as a denial of the inherent directedness or aboutness of the inferential work underlying communication, and thus intentionality in the sense proposed by Brentano and his student, Husserl (Jacob 2003; Jaszczolt 1999: 88; Nuyts 2000: 2-3; cf. Searle 1983: 1).<sup>7</sup> The notion of dyadic cognizing, for instance, presupposes that “all of these inferences have ‘objects’ and so are ‘intentional’ in Brentano’s sense” (Arundale 2008, p.258, fn.4). But as Duranti (2006: 33) argues, this sense of the “aboutness” or “directionality” of talk “does not presuppose that a well-formed thought precedes action.” In other words,

we might be able to recognize the ‘directionality’ of particular communicative acts (e.g. through talk and embodiment) without being able to specify whether speakers did or did not have the narrow intention to communicate what is being attributed to them by their listeners. (Duranti 2006: 36)

Such a position depends, of course, on clearly differentiating the broader notion of intentionality from the notion of intention, a distinction which has often been glossed over in pragmatics.

This move away from speaker intentions as being central to the conceptualization of communication also raises the question of just how do we know what is (being) communicated? One possibility is the notion of accountability, originally proposed in the work of Garfinkel (1967) and Sacks (1964[1992: 4-5]), where interlocutors hold themselves and others accountable for meanings that arise from what is said (Heritage 1984a). Heritage (1988) further divides accountability into two types: normative and moral accountability. The former, normative accountability, refers to the “the taken-for-granted level of reasoning through which a running index of action and interaction is created and sustained” (Heritage 1988: 128). The latter, moral accountability, encompasses “the level of overt explanation in which social actors give accounts of what they are doing in terms of reasons, motives or causes” (*ibid.*: 128). It is into the latter type of accountability that the discussion of speaker intentions perhaps best falls (Arundale 2008: 257; Haugh 2008b, 2008c), although Arundale (2008) goes on to argue that *intention* in this sense has no “privileged status” amongst other accounts that may be offered.

when persons do offer accounts for their own or other’s utterances or behaviours, they can be observed to offer a much wider range of accounts indexing situational factors, automatic, overlearned, or formulaic actions, interference by others, emotional stressors, lapses in cognitive abilities, and more. (Arundale 2008: 257)

It is therefore not simply through inferences about speakers’ intentions, but instead by holding each other accountable to the proactive affording and retroactive constraining of each other’s interpreting and producing of each utterance in interaction (Arundale and Good 2002: 135), that communication is possible. This is not to say that we necessarily always end up with shared or common understandings of what is communicated. It is just as easy to talk of diverging interpretations as it is converging interpretations within this approach (Arundale 2008: 250; Haugh 2008b). But, crucially,

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<sup>7</sup> “Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity.” (Brentano 1874: 88-89, cited in Jacob 2003)

whether we agree on what has been communicated or not, what we understand to have been communicated is nevertheless interactionally achieved.<sup>8</sup>

Questions remain though as to what further constraints there might be on dyadic inferential work. As noted in the first section of this paper, the emphasis on sociocultural knowledge and practices in conceptualizations of communication in sociocultural-interactional pragmatics is clearly another dimension that constrains what is or can be communicated (see Liddicoat this volume). Such sociocultural knowledge and practices may include lexical or phraseological knowledge as discussed in Kecskes's (2008) Dynamic Model of Meaning, or cultural scripts as discussed by Wierzbicka (2003) and Goddard (2006). Another constraint on inferential work is the interactional machinery on which such inferential work depends (Levinson 2006a, 2006b; Schegloff 2006). Much of this work points to the need to reconcile our understandings of monadic cognizing, dyadic cognizing, and, possibly, a kind of shared or "group" cognizing that underlie communication. There therefore remains much to explore along the path of reconceptualizing communication in pragmatics.

### Transcription conventions

The following transcription symbols are utilized:

[ ]	overlapping speech
(0.5)	numbers in brackets indicate pause length
(.)	micropause
:	elongation of vowel or consonant sound
-	word cut-off
.	falling or final intonation
?	rising intonation
,	'continuing' intonation
=	latched utterances
<u>underlining</u>	contrastive stress or emphasis
CAPS	markedly louder
◦ ◦	markedly soft
↓ ↑	sharp falling/rising intonation
> <	talk is compressed or rushed
< >	talk is markedly slowed or drawn out
( )	blank space in parentheses indicates uncertainty about the transcription

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<sup>8</sup> It is a common misconception that an interactional achievement approach to communication presupposes that communicators are always "cooperative" or that communication is always "successful" (see, for instance, Xie 2008: 167, fn.11).



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