Metaphor and Reconciliation
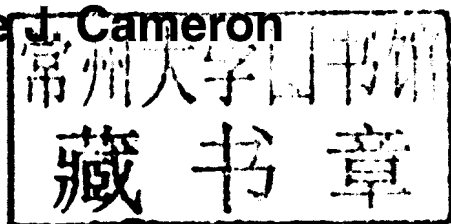
The Discourse Dynamics of Empathy in

Post-Conflict Conversations

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
New York   London

Preface

Jo Berry and Pat Magee are not ordinary people, and their conversations together are extraordinary. Because of this, what may be learnt from researching how they talk together will not necessarily be easily transferred to other people and other situations. However, it is my hope that this applied linguistic study can contribute in some way to understanding responses to violence and conflict that avoid revenge and bitterness.

In this book, I have taken metaphor, familiar to me through years of empirical work, and put it to work to try to find out how Jo and Pat create and build empathy from their starting point as victim and perpetrator of violence. In the process, I have refined the methodology that I call 'metaphor analysis' for application to social science problems. The book aims to show the tools and methods that metaphor analysis provides for working with transcribed talk, and to illustrate its potential to arrive, through deep attention to the language and meaning of talk, at insightful interpretation. Inspired by Vygotsky and Bakhtin, I continue, somewhat unfashionably, to resist the separation of metaphor in thought from metaphor in language, and to insist on the inseparable nature of metaphor as discourse activity. It is to be hoped that sceptical readers will be persuaded of the necessity of this when they see metaphor analysis in action.

The book is the first publication from a three year project around empathy and metaphor called "Living with Uncertainty", part of the Global Uncertainties programme of the ESRC. The new dynamic model of empathy that emerges from analysis of Jo and Pat's conversations will, in time, be complemented by descriptive models of other types of empathy development as other parts of the project investigate responses to the Other in uncertain times. (Project website: http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/livingwithuncertainty/)

Transcription Conventions

The following conventions are used in the transcriptions of talk:

Pauses:

. .	micro pause
. . .	longer pause, but less than one second
. . . (2.0)	two second pause

Overlapping talk is marked with square brackets: [ ]

The ends of intonation units are marked with the following symbols:

, continuing intonation contour

. final intonation contour

-- a truncated (incomplete) intonation unit

? rising intonation contour

Other symbols:

<Q Q>	quoted or reported speech or thought
<X X>	indecipherable talk
<@ @>	laughter

Capital letters are used for *I* and for proper nouns but not at the beginning of intonation units.

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1 Coming Together
Background to the
Conciliation Process

and I saw very clearly.
that the--
the end of that journey,
would be,
sitting down and,
talking to the people who did it.
—Jo Berry (second meeting with t Magee, 2000)

In this book you will read about two people who ach across pain and loss to make sense of one day in history and its c sequences, a pivotal day when a bomb exploded and a family lost a fath when a paramilitary operation targeting a member of the British gover ient was successfully carried out by a member of a politically motivated i vement. His action— her father's killing. Fifteen years later, the two met d talked to share their stories, although when we look closely we find that ese are more than stories, and that they can never actually be fully shar(Through a brave and difficult struggle towards understanding, Jo Berry d Pat Magee arrive at new perceptions of themselves and each other.

The histories of Jo Berry and Patrick Magee fir intersected on the day that Jo's father was killed in the bombing of the (nd Hotel in Brighton, along with several other members of the British overnment. From this point, their paths diverged. Jo Berry began deal ; with the grief of her loss, determined to learn more about the situation it had led to the bombing. Pat Magee was arrested and imprisoned, ui a political settlement between the British government and Irish repub ins in 1999 led to his release. Fifteen years after the bombing in Brightc they met and sat down together across a table, each ready to talk and to ten.

As an applied linguist and metaphor scholar, I s privileged to be given access to recordings made at some of their meetii , to be funded to investigate how they used metaphor in their talk, and t neet Jo Berry and, later, Pat Magee. This book is a report of my study of t ir talk together, and the result of trying to resolve issues that arose in doi the research. Empirical research begins with a dataset; here the data can as recordings of conversations, a trace of the original human interaction ombined with discourse analysis, metaphor analysis offers useful, althou; always partial, access to

how participants are thinking about what they are saying, as they say it. Analysis pulls the talk to pieces in many different ways to try to understand it more deeply or more fully. But, knowing that the whole is more than can be ever revealed through analysis, what is gained from minute attention to detail must be balanced with thoughtful interpretation and synthesis. This book reports what I found out, about metaphor in talk, and about the need to push the limits of existing methodology, but, most importantly, about the effortful process of reaching an understanding of another human being who could well have been a bitter enemy. Pat Magee's act of violence created for Jo Berry the need to understand the people and politics of Ireland; she tried to bridge the gap between them and he came to meet her.

THE CONCILIATION PROCESS

How to label the process that Jo Berry and Pat Magee engage in is complicated. One of the goals of the research set out in this book is to understand more about the nature of this process. Jo often describes it metaphorically as *a journey*, as in the extract of data that opens the chapter. The title of the book uses the term 'reconciliation'; here, we need to adjust that slightly and select a label for the process that the book documents.

'Reconciliation' is not entirely suitable because it suggests an initial conciliated position, lost through conflict and then regained; this was not the case for Jo Berry and Pat Magee. Even to posit a single process that could be labelled may be inappropriate. Each participant engaged in multiple processes: Jo was dealing with the grief around her father's death, with knowing this was a politically motivated and violent death, and with the impact of meeting Pat face-to-face. Pat was also coping with the impact of meeting, while reflecting on his motivations as a younger man, and the implications of accepting responsibility for Jo's father's death. The separate processes were complemented by the shared process of engaging in discourse. The dynamics of the discourse changed with each meeting, including how words and phrases came to stand for ideas or events and the kinds of things that they felt comfortable introducing to the talk.

The term 'conciliation process' will be used as an overarching label for the evolving discourse between Jo Berry and Pat Magee as they try to understand more about each other across a divide caused by violence. The term is intended to encompass both the processes that each person separately engaged in and the shared processes in their meetings, recognising that people operate at the same time both as individuals and as a dyad (Poland, 2007).

When they met in the early years after Pat Magee's release from prison, the participants themselves were not sure where the conciliation process would take them, whether they could reach some understanding, whether each meeting would be the last one or there would be sufficient reason to

meet again. After ten years, their conciliation process must be considered a success. Jo Berry and Pat Magee have continued to talk with each other, in public and in private, over the time since they first met. They work separately and together to encourage other people to engage in conciliation, to repair lives torn apart by violence. They have found ways to understand each other that enable empathy while not denying the horror and moral trespass of what happened. Throughout their conversations, Jo Berry and Pat Magee reflect on the conciliation process as it happens. Their own understandings of the process evolve alongside their evolving understanding of each other.

METAPHOR AND RECONCILIATION

Most of us do not, thank goodness, have such a weight of sorrow to deal with as the early death of a father in terrible circumstances. Nor do we have to face the man who made and put the bomb in the hotel with conscious intent to kill and injure other human beings. Jo Berry had to meet Pat Magee knowing that he had done this, knowing too that some relatives of other victims condemned what she was doing. She met Pat with her words, and, behind the words, with her thinking, and with her determination to be open to what he had to say to her. When Pat Magee agreed to meet Jo Berry, he expected to hear anger but instead found a willingness to listen to the words he had to say, about his move into the IRA and violence, about the dehumanising effect of conflict on those involved. Language is the most crucial tool we have when we encounter other people, and this book analyses how Jo and Pat spoke with each other, how they listened to what each other had to say and how language affected their thinking.

Extract 1.1   Jo reads a poem to Pat that she wrote before meeting him:

594 Jo   . . . (1.0) as a human being,
595   . . I listen to your suffering,
596   . . . (1.0) you offer me the story,
597   . . . pain of your war,
598   . . . (1.0) I learn,
599   . . . bridges,
600   . . can be built.

One particular way of using language turns out to be especially useful in this examination: metaphor. Metaphor can be loosely defined as "seeing one thing in terms of something else" (Burke, 1945, 503). A metaphor brings together two different ideas and, through some interaction of their meanings, produces a further sense. The words underlined in extract 1.1 have been identified as being used metaphoricall

Metaphor helps say the unsayable, whether that be thoughts too painful to speak directly or ideas that might threaten the person we are talking with. Metaphor can be a golden phrase, like Jo's *bridges can be built*, that illumi-nates the idea of reaching shared understanding with the people who killed her father, and that was used in the poem she read aloud to Pat, and from which extract 1.1 is taken. Such metaphors can capture thoughts in elegant or exciting words, lighting up ideas so that they suddenly mean much more than they could in a more literal form. Metaphor is also built into the very ordinary ways in which we use words to share our thinking with others. We *make* much more than physical objects like baskets or cakes; we meta-phorically *make friends* or *enemies, make love* or *war, make do, make a noise, a deal, a fuss.* We make metaphor from the most ordinary words in the language, *coming up with ideas* or *going along with a plan.* Metaphor is everywhere once we look for it, or nearly everywhere; sometimes espe-cially powerful and meaningful, but more often just mundane and ordi-nary. However, even when everyday and ordinary, metaphor does more than just saying; it connects into our thinking through the words used. By collecting the metaphors that people use, we can understand something of their thinking. We can catch glimpses of how their thinking has been shaped by the culture they grew up in, and by the people they live around; how thinking is shaped by participating in talk and by processing the ideas that others offer them in conversation. Plotting people's metaphors as they talk is rather like following the breadcrumb trail that led Hansel and Gretel out of the forest. Metaphors offer a path through the confusion of con-versation, with its stops and starts, its deviations and back tracks. When people pick up a metaphor they used several years before and use it again to describe momentous events, we know that this way of talking and thinking matters to them. Metaphor will act as a guide through the conversations of Jo Berry and Pat Magee, helping track changes and constancies over a ten year period, and giving us insights into the process of reconciliation and the growth of empathy across the gap between them.

RECONCILIATION AND EMPATHY

The literature on reconciliation speaks of it as a 'rehumanisation' of people who were once enemies in conflict. In order for human beings to hurt each other, goes the argument, a process of dehumanisation must take place, in which the enemy becomes less than human, possessed with negative quali-ties that demand a violent response, or becomes simply a representative of a negatively evaluated group (Oberschall, 2000). Causing harm to individuals is recast into fighting or destroying the dehumanised group, state or institu-tion. Dehumanisation may occur and spread as a result of violent incidents between individual members of opposing groups, gradually convincing indi-viduals to perceive themselves as part of a group that must react or respond

against the opposing group. Dehumanisation may beg i or be encouraged at the level of the social group, as when war is official · declared or when propaganda shapes people's attitudes and values to oth groups.

In the Irish situation, a long history of political de isions, conflict and violence contributed to the formation of social groups a d negative attitudes to others. The provisional IRA, as one of the group involved in violent conflict from the 1960s to the late 1990s, developed lehumanised views of the people they considered their enemies: the Briti establishment and Protestant organisations in Ireland. Pat Magee, as a y ung man, became a member of the provisional IRA (but is no longer), ar , through that, was encouraged to dehumanise people like Jo Berry's fath , Sir Anthony Berry, a British Member of Parliament and a member of the Irs Thatcher's Cabinet in the British Conservative government in the 198 s. Pat explained this to Jo in their second meeting, extract 1.2, summarisi ; with the metaphor *he was a legitimate target.*

Extract 1.2   He was a legitimate target:

369 Pat	. . . (2.0) Brighton,
370	. . . (1.0) from our perspective,
371	was a justified act.
372	. . . (1.0) your father,
373	and I don't--
374	. . I don't know if your father even spo out about the war.
375	er I'm led to believe that he had*
376	. . . he--
377	he made no contributions to,
378	the sort of debate on it.
379 Jo	. . hmh
380 Pat	. . . but he was--
381	er,
382	. . . (2.0) he was a part of,
383	. . you know the,
384	. . . (1.0) you know,
385	. . . (1.0) the political elite.
386	the . . Tory government.
387	etcetera.
. . .	
401	. . he was a legitimate target.

When violent conflict comes to an end, through xhaustion with fighting or through interventions for peace, former enemi need to be rehumanised to avoid reigniting conflicts and for peace to l :ome more permanent. The conciliation process requires Pat to see Sir A hony Berry as *a human being,* no longer just as a dehumanised *target,* bui ; *father* and *grandfather* (extract 1.2 ctd).

Extract 1.2 (ctd):

402	Pat	. . . (2.0) meeting you though.
403		. . . (1.0) I'm reminded of the fact that he was also a human being.
404		. . . (1.0) and that he was your father.
405		. . . and that he was your--
406		. . . (1.0) your daughter's,
407		. . . grandfather.
408		. . and that's . . all <u>lost</u>.

Coming to see a former enemy as individualised human beings is a complex process much influenced by the nature of the particular conflict. It involves institutions and individuals if it is to be successful, and is often mediated these days by professional conflict resolution experts or official reconciliation processes, as happened in South Africa.

Looking more deeply into the process of rehumanising, Halpern and Weinstein (2004), who investigated the development of empathy in post-conflict reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia and in South Africa, make a connection between reconciliation and empathy. They suggest that empathy lies at the core of reconciliation, and is what must be developed by individuals towards members of the former conflicting group. Empathy, as they see it, is not just experiencing how another person feels, but something more subtle and powerful. Alongside sympathy or emotional attunement with others, empathy also works cognitively and morally. Cognitively, empathy requires that people seek to understand the other person's perspective on the world: their perspective on themselves and how they fit in their society; their perspective on history; their perspective on their future, and how conflict appeared necessary to improve that future. While empathy does not require a person to agree with the reasoning or rationalising that led to violence, at the same time, it does not let this ethical gap prevent perspective-taking and emotional attunement. Empathy becomes really powerful by separating out approval of a person's actions, choices or decisions from understanding why that person took those actions or made those choices and decisions.

> The work of empathy is precisely trying to imagine a view of the world that one does not share, and in fact may find it quite difficult to share. (Halpern and Weinstein, 2004, 581)

Such empathy requires finding ways to live with the 'emotional ambivalence', as Halpern and Weinstein describe it, of understanding the Other while retaining the right to disagree with them. It is not the easy option.

What is Known About Empathy

The initial idea of empathy was formulated within the discipline of aesthetic psychology, and concerned the interpretation of a work of art by
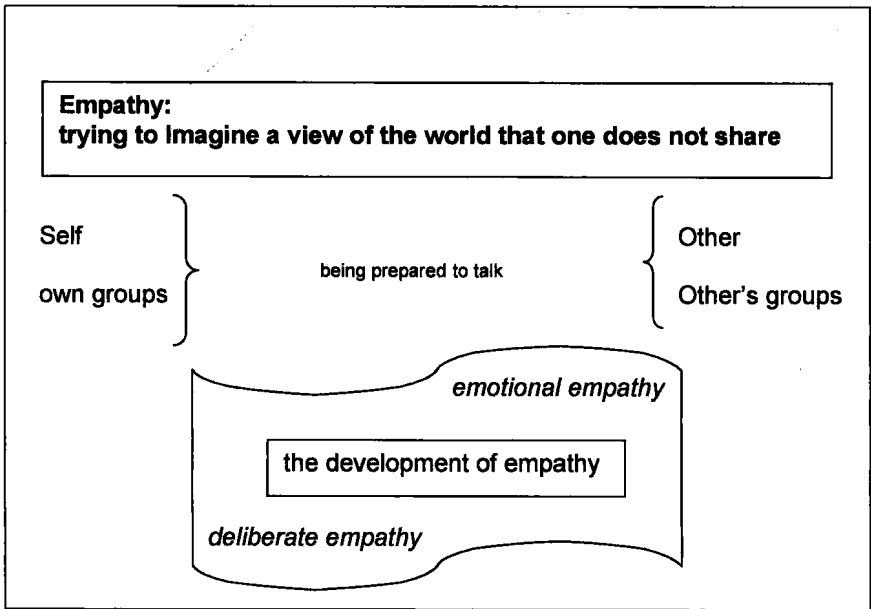
Figure 1.1   A basic model of empathy for the conciliation process.

projecting oneself 'into' the imagined perspective of it, experiencing the emotion of the artist and the art (Valentino, 2005). In the century that has passed since the idea of empathy was first introduced, as *Einfüh-lung* or 'feeling into' (Lipps, 1903), the construct has been developed and divided. In the last 20 years, advances in neuroscience have provided some clarity about the nature and mental basis of empathy, but much remains imprecise (Preston and de Waal, 2002). Empathy has been explored by philosophers, applied across the arts, is receiving increased attention in neuroscience through magnetic resonance imaging, and has received empirical attention leading to detailed development in the contexts of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation. Figure 1.1 summarises current understandings of the nature of empathy that are described in this section.

Self and Other

Affective and cognitive processes of empathy take place within the mind of the individual, 'the Self' (also called 'the Subject' by some scholars). The object of empathising is 'the Other', with the capital signifying all that is encapsulated as the otherness of someone who is not oneself, sometimes incorporating their social as well as their personal identity. The philosophical notion of the Other who exists both in opposition

to, and helps construct, the self can be traced from the work of Hegel, through Husserl and, later, Sartre. The notion was adapted for feminist philosophy by Simone de Beauvoir and for post-colonial studies by Edward Said. In identity theory, the idea of the Other underpins the construct of 'out-groups' and 'in-groups' through which the self builds a social identity through affiliation with the in-group and distancing from the Other as out-group (Tajfel, 1981).

Between Self and Other is a complex of distinctions and differences that comprise alterity, or 'otherness' (Bakhtin, 1981), and that makes the Other seem distinct and different from the Self. In most instances, people act on the basis of 'perceived alterity', i.e. their perception or understanding of the alterity between Self and Other, rather than any absolute, verifiable alterity. Alterity changes as people come to understand each other.

In order to understand the Other, Bakhtin suggests that the empathic process required is one of *vzhivanie* or "live entering", later developed as "creative understanding" (Morson and Emerson, 1990; Valentino, 2005). For Bakhtin, creative understanding is:

> to enter actively into another individuality, another perspective on the world—without losing sight even momentarily of one's own unique perspective, one's own "surplus" of life experience, one's own sense of self. (Valentino, 2005, 3)

The connection between Self and Other is not straightforward. Experimental findings confirm that a capacity for Self-Other differentiation is required for imagining how the Other feels in their situation (Lamm, Batson and Decety, 2007; Lamm, Meltzoff and Decety, 2009). On the other hand, the process of coming to understand the Other also affects the idea one has of oneself. We will see how the interaction of Self and Other plays out for Jo Berry and Pat Magee as they engage in the conciliation process.

The Possibility of Empathy

'Emotional empathy' is instantaneous and instinctive, in the sense that it occurs unless inhibited. 'Deliberate empathy', often described as 'perspective-taking' in the literature, is more conscious, takes time and involves more cognitive effort. The various affective and cognitive processes that facilitate empathy of both types are, in the basic model, labelled as 'the development of empathy'. It is one of the central aims of the book to describe the nature of the processes that contribute to the developing empathy between Jo Berry and Pat Magee across the wide and painful alterity created by the IRA killing of Sir Anthony Berry.

However, both types of empathy are subject to the prerequisite of being prepared to encounter the Other, described as *being open to the other story* in extract 1.3.