

Spaces of Polyphony

Edited by Clara-Ubalina Lorda
and Patrick Zabalbeascoa

DIALOGUE STUDIES 15

Spaces of Polyphony

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Volume 15

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Introduction

Clara-Ubaldina Lorda and Patrick Zabalbeascoa

This collective volume focuses on dialogism in dialogue, a topic which is, according to Bakhtin's formulations from the 1930s, the basic reality of language, conceived as actual use, in which the other is the condition of discourse. About forty years later, Benveniste (1974: 79–88) showed how individuals turn language into discourse through the use of *deictic elements* and other *enunciation marks*, and stated that as soon as a speaker uses language, and turns to such formal elements, s/he establishes an interlocutor and underlines a relationship with a partner.

Dialogue is, indeed, the universal and everlasting way in which language is used. Furthermore, beyond the alternative exchange of interlocutors in a face to face conversation, *dialogism* designates the complex and multifarious interrelations among words, utterances and points of view in discourse.

Language exists on that creative borderzone or boundary between human consciousnesses, between self and other that constitutes the capacity of language to produce new meaning. (Morris 1994: 5)

The term polyphony is used here metaphorically, as in most linguistic approaches to the phenomenon we are studying. It was first proposed by Bakhtin in his study of Dostoyevsky's novels (1984), to refer to different types of language, which share the same discursive space and where there is no hierarchy: i.e. narrators and heroes' discourses interact as equals. Such was the meaning of the musical term used in the XVII and XVIII centuries: several voices are heard, they are independent, they imitate each other but they also answer each other. For Bakhtin, a particular case of polyphony is heteroglossia, which should refer to the clash of antagonistic forces through different languages, one whose manifestations is diglossia, or polyglossia; i.e. the simultaneous use of two or more national languages in a given society. Beyond these three or four terms, the chapters of this volume, exploring 'spaces of polyphony', aim to describe different forms of dialogism in various discourse genres from several scientific approaches and an array of points of view. Fittingly, then, this is a polyphonic book.

Let's not forget the multilayered meaning of the term 'dialogism'. First of all, Bakhtin's insight tells us that each word sounds and resounds with the various aspects of the multilingual conscience that surround it and each utterance is always a complex response to other utterances. These phenomena underlie the notion of *interdiscourse*, theorised by various scholars and particularly described by Authier-Revuz as *interdiscursive dialogism*.

The non-coincidence of the discourse with itself (or its constitutive discursive heterogeneity) refers, as *constitutive*, to the fact that all speech cannot, incessantly, avoid being embedded, determined, divided and so forth by the reality of the external discursive space where it is produced, received, sent. (Authier-Revuz 2012: 23)¹

This French scholar (1982: 112) recalls Bakhtin's metaphor: only the mythical Adam, approaching a freshly created world, could have avoided the dialogical relationship with the already said and the words of the others.

Secondly, dialogism also applies to dialogues, the ones that correspond to conversational genres where the speakers take turns, as studied by Conversational Analysis (CA). These dialogues are regulated by social norms, and depend on genre (Charaudeau 2009). In the face-to-face exchange, a range of different polyphonic phenomena can be observed. Beyond turn-taking exchanges, the utterances of one of the participants can be repeated, rejected, or discussed by the other participant as both interlocutors shape their speeches in anticipation of their addressee's response.

From a dialogical point of view, comprehension is (more or less) inter-comprehension, and meaning is the result of a strategic and asymmetric co-construction of the participants. This is why Authier-Revuz (1982: 119) brings up Lacan: "The style is.... the addressee."

Furthermore, a speaker can point out someone else's words in her/his utterance by the formal means of reported speech, which can vary depending on the amount of shifting introduced by the speaker who uses these words. Today these means are categorised with different linguistic labels (quotation, indirect discourse, free direct/indirect discourse, represented or evoked discourse). Bakhtin, under the pen name of Volosinov (1986), had already divided these different ways of reporting the words of others into two main expressive categories according to style: *linear* and *pictorial*.

Reporting the words means to assign a place to the *other*, and, in doing so, following Authier-Revuz, the speaker subject tries to create the illusion of being the creator of her/his own words.

Embedded in the impenetrable strangeness of one's own words, when marking explicitly the heterogeneities in one's discourse, the speaking subject circumscribes the other in those words. In this way, s/he affirms that the other is not everywhere. (1982: 145)²

1. Our translation

2. Our translation

These two main manifestations of dialogism are connected. Double dialogism implies at least a double parameter in the analysis: the dialogue between the addresser and the addressee, plus the dialogue with what has already been uttered. Finally, dialogism also reflects the internal division of the subject. Like Bakhtin, Benveniste states that a “monologue” is an interiorised dialogue, formulated as “inner language” between an “I who speaks and an I who listens.” (1974: 85, our translation)

The division of the subject is, in fact, a matter of degree, ranging from the inner dialogue all the way to an unconscious fragmentation of the self, as described by Lacan (1966), in the slipstream of Freud’s reflections. In between these extremes, a host of possibilities exist in language for indicating the diversity of points of view, the nuances and the contradictions in the same speaking subject. Different linguistic approaches, mainly French (for instance, Ducrot 1984), have described these phenomena, starting from the distinction between the person actually speaking and the enunciator(s), not always one and the same, which explains how it is possible to express several points of view in a single utterance.

The forms of dialogism that we have listed above appear in different ways, depending on the range of discourse genres, where they are materialised more or less consciously and more or less strategically. We have divided this volume into five Parts, covering five different genre areas.

The first part of this volume is dedicated to polyphonic phenomena in everyday or casual conversation. This is the discursive area where polyphonic phenomena are less consciously applied; they are generated by the conversational competence that the speaking subjects acquire over time.

Sanders, in Chapter one, shows that this competence is acquired at a very early age. He proposes an overview of the strategic mechanism regulating verbal interactions, illustrated by children’s conversations. Sanders reminds us of the anticipatory character of the utterances, assessed by Bakhtin again and again, as we have said above. The question, for Sanders, is how to reconcile the individual notion of ‘strategy’ with co-construction of polyphonic meaning in dialogue. In this respect, French discourse analysis has theorised that conversation implies an external social space where (at least) two participants exchange utterances while evaluating each other. Discourse developed by enunciators is the result of such an evaluation, namely the participants’ use of what freedom they have to develop their own strategies (Charaudeau 2009). Sanders suggests, through several samples from children’s conversations, that this natural property of discourse is developed very early in life.

Chapters two and three in this part study specific polyphonic phenomena in casual conversation. Maria Christodoulidou analyses polyphony as a diversity of points of view transported by irony. She shows, on the one hand, that Goffmann’s *frame* could be doubled, giving rise to a new interpretation of the utterances and,

on the other hand, how reported speech can be used for obtaining polyphonic effects in complaint story-telling.

Béatrice Priego-Valverde's object of study is humour in friendly and family conversations. Her focus is two-tiered; she looks at generalized interdiscourse, in which all the interactions take place, and also at the division of points of view, which can be emphasised in humoristic exchanges.

Priego-Valverde, also takes into consideration other approaches to humour, and in doing so underlines its complexity, its ambivalence and the phenomenon of double-voicing. The context of the exchanges she analyses, involving people who are close, allows her to show a mixture of affective attitudes conveyed by humour. Among other issues, her study sheds light on linguistic markers which involve connecting speech turns by repeating a word, completely or partially, previously used by another participant or by allusion to other texts. The item may be repeated with a different meaning, producing something akin to a pun.

Part 2 deals with language learning. Chapter four is devoted to the evolution of children and self-designation, from 18 to 36 months. Aliyah Morgenstern shows the slow setting-up of the different notions corresponding to the subject in young children and how they shift among several designations.

Through her study of the pronominal reversals produced by two French children, and the functions associated to each form, Morgenstern shows their identity variations. Namely, following the situation of the speeches, they talk as *another*: they use third person for narratives; they use second person when they simulate an adult identity and, in doing so, they echo the words addressed to them; in this way, by trial and error, they progress towards the stabilisation of the I (*je*).

The other three chapters in Part 2 explore three different educational environments. Chapter five by Claudio Baraldi, studies intercultural educational communities. The focus is on a specific aspect of conversation, the use of *formulations* in intercultural dialogues. He demonstrates the educational value of this strategy in promoting the joint construction of meanings; its functions vary according to the way in which the formulation interacts with previous turns or others yet to come; this can also appear as part of a series of formulations or be coordinated with speech acts. The use of formulations, concludes Baraldi, might contribute to harmonising values, obtaining shared knowledge and fulfilling affective expectations.

In contrast, Chapter six reveals an educational misunderstanding. Federico Farini has developed his research within the context of several primary schools in Northern Italy. From the standpoint of the current trends in educational programs, he examines the use of an educator's interrogative-negative questions.

Farini observes that this kind of question involves certain constraints on the addressees, who are, at some point, obliged to answer affirmatively and, thereby accept the educator's proposal. As Farini shows in his analysis, the pupils do not

always respond accordingly and try to present their own point of view, which is in turn not always accepted by the teacher. Unfortunately, the attempt to change the actor's roles in the educational premise sometimes becomes a mere simulation of polyphonic dialogue.

In Chapter seven, Rachel Showstack also takes into consideration a teaching context, namely in US schools where phenomena of English-Spanish diglossia occur. She aims to present, from a critical approach, the negotiation of ideologies and identities, and the processes of legitimization and delegitimization through discourse in classrooms. In particular, Showstack explores how students use metalinguistic strategies which show different attitudes in "heritage speakers" regarding their position as bilinguals. English appears to have a symbolic power; whereas speaking (good) Spanish and having a hybrid identity might add value as well. In any case, bilinguals often challenge and contest any essentialisation of these different linguistic conditions.

The contributors of Part 3 analyse characteristic television genres and/or political discourse. They study polyphonic strategies of three genres (electoral debate, parliamentary question-time sessions and talk-show), where the external dialogue (question-and-answer; turn taking) is intrinsically overlapped with interdiscursive context; as a result, other discourses and others' discourses criss-cross with the ongoing interaction.

Daciana Vlad studies an aspect of the televised debate in which Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy debated their proposals before the 2007 presidential election. Vlad establishes two kinds of gradations with regard to polyphonic strategies: firstly, polyphony can be more or less dialogic; secondly, polyphony can be more or less conflictive.

In the case of the debate under her analysis, polyphonic strategies are, indeed, dialogic and strongly conflictive. This character is determined by the *contract* of the genre (Charaudeau 2005). Both participants, who are supposedly to be on equal footing, debate their proposals and try to enhance their individual ethos by disparaging each other. Vlad shows that these disparaging attempts are developed through polyphonic strategies, mainly the echoing of words used by the opponent. These words are discussed, contradicted, ironically quoted or even manipulated, in order to obtain a victory over their rival, precisely by using the other's own words. Their aim is to obtain the general public's confidence and, ultimately, their votes.

Maria Sivenkova, Chapter nine, explores political discourse as well, but in this case it is not mediated by television or other mass media. Sivenkova examines a sub-genre of parliamentary debates, from a comparative standpoint, in British and Russian parliaments.

The overt goals of parliamentary discourses are to help legislate or to check the government. Sivenkova studies question-time control sessions, specifically,

criticisms manifested by metadiscursive utterances. Her typology demonstrates the variety of forms and functions of such strategies, hereby MPs regulate their negotiations and their conflicts; their remarks refer not only to the ongoing interaction, but they also rely on previous sessions and other sub-genres.

This contributor also outlines certain trends that distinguish the parliaments under consideration; whereas British MPs seem to criticise their opponent's statements, Russian MPs would rather point a blaming finger at their behaviour.

The other two chapters in this part dissect a talk-show broadcast on Czech television. Martin Havlik, and then Světa Čmejrková and Jana Hoffmannová, breaking away from a straightforward description of the genre, show the polyphonic strategies which allow the host to fulfil his purposes. In contrast with presidential debates, the aim of a talk show is to entertain the audience. There is a hierarchical distance between the participants, since in "Uvolněte se, prosím" ("Relax, please"), for the purpose of providing fun, the host takes advantage of his guests by playing on their words or on what third parties have said about them.

In Chapter ten, Havlik mostly studies prosodic and other non-verbal markers which produce ironic effects. In Chapter 11, Čmejrková and Hoffmannová, also explore rhetorical wrestling between host and guest where the words of the latter are used along with other discourses, for instance embarrassing rumours.

Part 4 contains three chapters which deal with polyphonic social and cultural aspects of intertextuality. Margareta Manu (Chapter twelve) describes the phenomenon of rumour in written journalism in Romania. In doing so, she distinguishes two aspects; firstly, the source(s) and the spreading agents of rumour; secondly, the textual marks of rumour, such as introductory *formulae*, the use of *evidentials* or the splitting of enunciative instances. Manu shows the ultimate heteroglossia of the texts, as being stylistically hybrid, and the strategic use of rumour by journalists, who legitimize their gossiping statements as coming from "public opinion".

In Chapter thirteen Ana Ene leads us towards a more extended dialogism. She treats the issue of translation from the standpoint of a dialogue between texts and cultures. Ene defends the dialogical nature of literature and its endeavour towards universality, which can only be totally attempted through translation. This contributor then raises the issue of the difficulty involved in translating. Ene advocates for an understanding of translation as proposed by theoreticians such as Berman or Meschonnic, who appeal for an ethics of translation, an ethics which implies a better dialogue among languages and cultures. To this end, they propose several means and procedures. One of them is to compare translations. In line with this idea, Ene presents an intertextual contrastive analysis of several translations of the same poem.

She sets up the rhetorical analysis, as an initial step, which is followed by an examination of the poem's translations. Ene concludes by proposing a peritextual dialogue in order to improve the quality of the translations.

Finally, Chapter fourteen in Part 4 broadens the scope for studying dialogism to encompass an artistic, cultural and social perspective. Yosi Anaya invites the reader to turn to American textiles and look at them as almost the last refuges for ancient texts. Anaya reminds us of Bakhtin's broad view of heteroglossia, which can be applied not only to words but also to forms. Therefore, textiles created by Meso-American indigenous women, notwithstanding a hegemonic tendency to erase them, constitute a space of dignity and cultural resistance. Anaya describes the discourses crossing these layered textiles, paradoxically through silent voices. The various motifs and models of *huipil* allow us to reconstruct different hues of individual creativity and a community's cultural and spiritual life.

The last part of this book concerns literary discourse. Bakhtin had already pointed out that literary language becomes a dialogue of languages where social variations are reflected. In the case of the novel, the very principle of its discourse is the presence of alternating voices (basically narrator and characters) which express different points of view of the world.

Through artistic elaboration a work of literature aims to achieve a more relevant reference (Ricoeur 1975: 289), which Jakobson had noted when he spoke of a "doubled reference" (1963: 238). Thus, dialogism and dialogue in literary texts manage to reveal something meaningful about the world. Moreover, since writers often explore the behaviour and the language of human beings, dialogues in novels teach us a great deal about conversational dynamics.

Chapter fifteen delves into the world of the Irish author Flann O'Brien. Flore Coulouma studies dialogism in two of his novels on three levels. The first level is the interlocutive. Coulouma analyses, in the light of the Conversation Analysis, how the characters subvert cooperative rules to reach a symbolic significance. The novel also shows the diglossia of language itself, by the language play involved in dissonant voices. Thirdly, the article explores the complex relationship between Flann O'Brien and the literary traditions that preceded him.

The novel is not the only genre veined by a diversity of voices and discourses. Emilia Parpala (Chapter sixteen) and Carmen Popescu (Chapter seventeen) study the polyphonic strategies used by several Romanian poets at the end of the 20th century. Parpala focuses her work on the poetry of the eighties. She discusses the restricted place Bakhtin has attributed to poetry, from a polyphonic approach. The Russian thinker, indeed, distinguished the popular novel from highbrow monologic literature, whose main point of reference would be (presumably highbrow) poetry. Responding to poetological constraints, Parpala shows, in her analysis, the poets' use of different enunciation markers in order to stage the division of the self,

to include other speaking subjects (even imaginary or fake ones) in their texts, and how, finally, these poets succeeded in furtively alluding to an oppressive regime in which they had to live.

Popescu devotes her work to the evolution of Romanian poetry in the nineteen-nineties, whose ironic stylization and parodies exploit the use of such techniques as the inclusion of fictional conversations, the hybridisation of languages or the general presence of interdiscourse in their poems. Through these strategies, and multiple readings, the poem also accomplishes its function of revealing the harm of an oppressive situation.

Finally, Chapter eighteen returns to the novel, but not to any novel in particular. As psychologists, Ilaria Riccioni and Andrzej Zuczkowski know the manifestations of the inner world in therapy. Nevertheless, because of the inaccessibility of the inner world, they also turn to several novels in order to show, through the analysis of verbal elements, how the essential division of the subject is manifested in discourse. In this way, by exploring shifters, conversational forms, semantic contradictions and pragmatic markers, they stage the disidentity of the individuals produced in inner discourse, as a natural result of the different parts composing each *I*.

In this volume we bring together interweaving strands of thinking from Veracruz to Belarus, combining models of communication and culture based on the concepts of interdiscourse, dialogism and polyphony. The contributors found spaces of polyphony in discourses of young and old people, in private conversation and in the media, in politics and in poetry, in education and in jokes, in the press and in translation, and even in non-verbal discourse literally woven into clothing as an alternative voice to Meso-American women.

The book is also a shared space for looking at and beyond the relevance of influential scholars, especially Bakhtin, and others like Authier-Revuz, Benveniste and Ducrot. It is a space, too, for making progress in discourse analysis and giving a voice to researchers who are breaking new ground in studies of polyphony. The book itself is accordingly polyphonic, and we hope the reader will also find it harmonious and choral. The chorus of the contributors' voices is a positive metaphor for scientific research, where different voices must take each other into account. We are sure the reader will find the dialogue established between the various Chapters and Parts of the book both enlightening and enriching.

PART 1

Strategies in daily conversations