

Invited Talk: On the Foundations of a Formal Discourse Pragmatics

Daniel Vanderveken¹

University of Quebec, Trois-Rivières ,
daniel.vanderveken@UQTR.CA,
<http://www.uqtr.ca/~vandervk/cvdrveng.htm>

Could we enrich speech-act theory to deal with discourse? Wittgenstein and Searle pointed out difficulties. Most conversations lack a conversational purpose, their background is indefinitely open, they can contain irrelevant and infelicitous utterances, they require collective intentionality, etc. In my view, the primary aim of discourse pragmatics is to analyze the structure and dynamics of language-games whose type is provided with an internal conversational goal. Such games that are indispensable to any kind of discourse have a descriptive, deliberative, declaratory or expressive point. So are exchanges of salutations, interrogations, negotiations and contracts. Logic can analyze felicity-conditions of such collective illocutions because they are conducted according to systems of constitutive rules. Speakers often speak non-literally or non-seriously. The units of conversation are attempted illocutions whether literal, serious or not. I will show how to construct speaker-meaning from sentence-meaning, conversational background and maxims. Like Montague, I believe that we need the resources of formalisms (proof-, model- and game-theories) and logic in pragmatics. I will explain how to further develop intensional and illocutionary logics, the logic of attitudes and of action in order to characterize our ability to converse. I will compare my approach to others (Austin, Belnap, Grice, Montague, Searle, Sperber and Wilson, Kamp, Wittgenstein) as regards hypotheses, methodology and issues. I will also deal with the nature of intelligent dialogues between man and machines in A.I.