

RELATIONS IN PRAGMATICS: A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION¹

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This paper raises some issues crucial for theoretical pragmatics. First of all, it claims that the fundamental, constitutive feature of pragmatics is its relational mode of being, which may be represented by using a scalar relational dynamics. Thus the basic set of relations that control the interactional dynamics between the mind and its relational context includes (1) uni- and bi-(multi)-directional relations (reciprocity), (2) the relation of 'supersession', (3) 'co-agency', (4) 'bi-(multi)-contextuality', and (5) 'relational clusters'. Furthermore, it examines the differences between logical and semantic relations versus pragmatic relations. Relational Pragmatics (a version of non-Cartesian pragmatics) is used as a framework for the integrative goal of this project. Relational Pragmatics (RP) is characterized as the study of the language user's 'pragmability', that is, the faculty of contextual language use and pragmatic interpretation of texts. Pragmability subsumes two faculties: (1) the Universal Pragmatic Potential (UPP), and (2) the Individual Pragmatic Potential (IPP). The latter is analyzed in terms of the Pragmatic Reference System and the Pragmatic Relational System. In RP, context is viewed as a dynamic relation rather than as knowledge, situation, or text.

1. Context in Relational Pragmatics

Kopytko (2001a:800-801) argues for an integrative approach to pragmatics and proposes the following 'minimal requirements' for a holistic account of pragmatic phenomena. First, 'holistic pragmatics' would have to present a conception of holism that can account for the use of language in the process of verbal interaction in its natural setting. Next, it would have to demonstrate that (1) the proposed conception of holism and (2) its use in pragmatics are theoretically justified and empirically supported. Finally, it would have to establish and theoretically justify the scope, structure, and inter-relations between all elements of the pragmatic system, such as the structure of, and relations between, the cognitive, affective, and conative factors, between the cognitive and social or the affective and social, and between the cognitive-affective-conative system and

the social system; in particular, it should be able to account for the fact that, depending on context, mental factors may operate jointly or separately. In the end, 'holistic pragmatics' should present a theory of temporal, interactive dynamics between (minimally two) context-dependent interactants (cognitive agents) endowed with specific bodily, mental, and socio-cultural qualities.

Language users in real speech situations, as well as analysts describing and interpreting pieces of discourse, have to relate the relevant texts to the rich universe of contextual elements that regulate the pragmatic interpretation and use of utterances /discourses. Non-Cartesian pragmatics (cf. Kopytko 2000) should adopt a 'pancontextual' (all-embracing) view of pragmatic phenomena. To be more specific, the question to consider is the following: How much context (or rather which contextual elements) do language users have to either know or retrieve from the universe of contextual factors that is located in their physical, mental, social and interactive context? In addition, linguists have to examine the structure, function, and dynamic interaction of the (intrinsic) cognitive, affective, and conative context with the (extrinsic) social, cultural, and interactive one, leading up to an investigation of the dynamic interrelations between the two types of context and a characterization of their interfaces. The idea of 'pancontextualism' (1) implies a broad range of pragmatic research (cf. Verschueren et al. 1995; and Mey 1998) and (2) does not admit of any restrictions on the scope of potential contextual factors in linguistic interaction, especially when such restrictions are imposed by pragmaticians and discourse analysts by *fiat*.

Different approaches to discourse (cf. Schiffrin 1993) focus on different elements of context. Thus, speech act theory (cf. Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Leech 1983; Mey 1993) and Gricean pragmatics (cf. Grice 1975) view context primarily as *knowledge*; interactional sociolinguistics (cf. Gumperz 1982) and the ethnography of speaking (cf. Hymes 1972, 1974) emphasize the significance of *knowledge* and *situation*; variation analysis (cf. Labov 1972) concentrates on *situation* and *text*; while conversational analysis (Garfinkel 1967, Levinson 1983, Sacks 1992) takes the relationships between *knowledge*, *situation*, and *text* as a major object of its investigation.

Finally, Mey (2001) and Verschueren (1999) argue for a broad view of context as knowledge, situation, and co-text.

The approaches to context presented above differ in their view of the scope of context and in their focus on (one might also say bias towards) certain elements of context and in their exclusion of others. The reason for this is found in the disciplinary bias and goals of particular researchers; note the influence of cultural anthropology on Malinowski's idea of context (cf. 1923, 1935); of analytical philosophy on Austin, Searle, and Grice; of sociolinguistics on Labov's variation analysis and John Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistics; or of ethnomethodology on conversational analysis, and so on (see also Firth 1957; Lyons 1977; Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Auer 1995; Kopytko 1995; and Kryk-Kastovsky 2002). Unfortunately, the prevailing method used by 'contextualists' (or researchers analyzing the context of language use) is that of a simple listing of the relevant contextual factors (elements).

In the pancontextual view of pragmatics advocated here, there is no limit to the scope of context. The relational context is open and dynamic. There is not just one locus of contextual knowledge; instead, context is distributed between actors, negotiated and frequently collectively constructed, deconstructed, and sometimes imposed upon them. Thus, the more skillful and powerful language users such as art or film critics, politicians, and ideologists may impose their views, beliefs, or context interpretations on others. In the present approach, we propose a basic dichotomy between the intrinsic vs. extrinsic context. Accordingly, the relational context may be examined by the *intrinsic*, contextual properties, phenomena, and processes specified above as actors' subjective Individual Pragmatic Potentials (IPP), correlated with other mental/cognitive elements and phenomena such as reasoning, self-awareness, goals, emotions, etc. In contrast, the elements of the relational context that are located beyond the mind/brain of the actor will be referred to as the *extrinsic* context. Actors have access to the extrinsic context through perceptual, cognitive-affective, and linguistic interfaces. Such an approach has important philosophical consequences, involving the question whether the available interfaces can secure objective cognition, or whether the intrinsic context does or does not

influence/distort the perception of the extrinsic context. The answer is that objective cognition is rather an unattainable ideal, and obviously, the subjective intrinsic context may distort social perception/judgment (cf. Forgas 1991).

The dynamic relations between the intrinsic and extrinsic contexts result in an *interactional context*, viewed as a theoretical construct that should account for all elements, factors, phenomena, and processes that appear in a specific verbal interaction. The most important among them are (1) integrative discourse processes such as the collective construction of meaning/context, rationality, and cooperation, and (2) disintegrative phenomena, such as misunderstanding, embarrassment, verbal aggression, conflict, deception, propaganda, social influence, etc. (cf. Giles and Robinson 1990).

The pancontextual view of pragmatics suggested above raises certain fundamental issues. In particular, it (1) questions the objectivity of the notion of 'context', (2) suggests a defocusing of the language user, (3) proposes an interactional point of view in pragmatic analysis, (4) explains why communicative success in verbal interaction is never guaranteed, and illusory understanding, or miscommunication, occurs so frequently, (5) suggests that actors' subjective Individual Pragmatic Potentials (see below) may change, develop, and be enriched, (6) notes that the interactional processes of multifarious cooperation between actors (including actors' adaptation, enrichment, etc., of their IPPs) may lead to some form of social consensus and understanding (which, however, may prove to be unstable and only temporary), (7) reveals the dependence of Relational Pragmatics on other disciplines that investigate the different aspects of the relational context, (8) points to the possible interdependence between related disciplines (as an interactive cluster of shared elements, phenomena, and processes), (9) shows the interface between disciplines and the theoretical and practical consequences of such a situation, and (10) suggests that the 'neighboring' disciplines of pragmatics constitute and control all the phenomena and processes of social/linguistic interaction.

Relational Pragmatics (cf. Kopytko 1998, and forthcoming) focuses on the analysis of relations between the elements of a pragmatic system that consists of (1) language users, (2) language,

and (3) context. Relational Pragmatics aims at identifying the problems that language users have to solve if they wish to participate successfully in social interaction, and also accounts for the communicative-interactive failures of incompetent participants. The three basic elements of the theory of language use, that is, the language user, language, and context, form an integrated system of interrelations.

As suggested above, a pragmatic system (PS) in Relational Pragmatics (RP) will be investigated as a triad, where three pairs of binary relations (xRy) make up a pragmatic system: (1) Interactant (I) $\diamond \emptyset$ Language (L), (2) Language (L) $\diamond \emptyset$ Context (C), and (3) Interactant (I) $\diamond \emptyset$ Context (C) (see Kopytko 1998). The crucial claim of Relational Pragmatics is the proposition that the three entities and interrelations between them make up the pragmatic system which underlies the *pragmability* (my term) of language users. Pragmability may be characterized as the faculty of contextual language use and pragmatic interpretation of texts. We assume, for the sake of a theoretical consideration, that language users can be characterized either as subjective agents by their *Individual Pragmatic Potentials* (IPPs), or as members of an abstract social construct/set of language users characterized by their *Universal Pragmatic Potential* (UPP) with some claims to universality and objectivity. Pragmability in Relational Pragmatics is a general notion that embraces both the Individual Pragmatic Potential (IPP) and the Universal Pragmatic Potential (UPP). It is significant to note that pragmability is not equivalent to the idea of pragmatic or communicative competence, because there is no distinction between competence and performance in RP. Thus, Relational Pragmatics is the study of language users' pragmability.

1.1. Context as relation

The version of non-Cartesian pragmatics labeled above as Relational Pragmatics depends critically on the idea of *context as relation*, which will be sketched below.

Context is the dynamic relation that affects both autonomous, natural (physical) objects, and mental objects like language. At its most fundamental level, context must be viewed as a relation of *co-being* or *co-presence*: in a situation, there must exist at least two objects (entities) capable of entering into physical, mental, social, cultural, and interactive relations in which one of them will assume the role of the context for the other. This is the necessary (ontological) condition for the existence of context. Thus, context should be considered, first of all, as a relation of co-being and then as a sequence of dynamic relations between context and its object, or between the *effector* (Latin 'originator', 'creator') and *affectus* (Latin 'affected', 'suffering'). Thus, the terms 'effector' and 'affected' will be used here to refer to the dynamic context (specifically to the inanimate cause of pragmatic interpretation) and the affected object respectively. The causal relation between effectors and affected will be referred to as *event*. In consequence, context may be characterized as the (dynamic) causal relations between effectors and affected. In consequence, the principles – *no relation, no context* (and its reverse) *no context, no relation* clearly reflect the basic assumption of Relational Pragmatics (RP). Furthermore, although RP does not focus on universal claims and innate ideas in pragmatic research, it is suggested that the fundamental pragmability and the social practice of relating effectors to affected (hearer's perspective) and affected to effectors (speaker's perspective) appear to be universal among language users and plausibly, at least in its cognitive aspect, to some extent innate. The individual differences in the mastery of the skill, which, undoubtedly not only relies on our pragmability or the IPP, but also on the content and relations in the cognitive-affective-conative system, are so striking that some innate substratum must be tentatively posited to account for the differences associated with these phenomena.

Texts (characterized as any representation of meaning by way of a symbolic system) are related to their contexts. Such a situation of relatedness may be analyzed using the concepts of 'effectors' and 'affected'. The latter concept refers to different types of texts; the former to contexts. It may be useful to propose a distinction between the internal, linguistic, and the non-linguistic, socio-cultural context

of texts. Thus, effectors responsible for the linguistic relations within text (such as coherence and cohesion) will be identified as linguistic effectors; on the other hand, those governing the non-linguistic relations between text and context will be referred to as non-linguistic effectors. Accordingly, texts (affected) are doubly related, first, linguistically to linguistic effectors and second, non-linguistically to non-linguistic effectors. The latter constitute a large set that includes the following classes of effectors: (1) mental (cognitive-affective-conative system); (2) social (micro- and macro-structures, social facts, social representations, gender, etc.); (3) interactional (creativity, emergent phenomena, miscommunication and others); (4) cultural (individualistic and collectivist cultures, cultural relativism, etc.).

The main task of Relational Pragmatics is to specify the relations between effectors and affected, and specifically between contexts and texts. The crucial notion in RP is that of 'relation', which, unfortunately, belongs among the vaguest terms in the scholarly dictionary. Although its general meaning is easily grasped intuitively, each branch of science and each scientific discipline uses it in many different senses. In addition, the time-honored tradition of logico-semantics (from Augustus de Morgan and Ernst Schröder through Charles S. Peirce to Bertrand Russell and modern logicians) focuses on a few selected formal and semantic aspects, such as reflexivity, symmetry, or transitivity rather than on their dynamics and causal effects of relations. Consequently, as will be shown below, a logical view of relations has a rather limited application to the human sciences and in particular, to the study of language use. So, there are good reasons to dwell some more on the concept of 'relation', especially that of a 'pragmatic relation', which will be the topic of the next section.

2. Relations in pragmatics

Pragmatics is the domain of dynamic relations between effectors and affected. The two pragmatic roles are not necessarily associated with any class of objects or entities; quite the contrary, being driven by

the contextual dynamics, effectors may or even must assume the role of affected and *vice versa*. Briefly, they are relational objects that result from 'pragmatic interaction', i.e. the contextual dynamics of the process of verbal communication. This accounts for the fact that both meanings and their contexts change during verbal interaction. Pragmatic relations should, first of all, be viewed as relational causes and effects, rather than as properties of entities, concepts, lexical items, etc. (as is the case in logical semantics). Logical relations (or rather, their logical properties) are usually (cf. Langer 1967) analyzed as symmetrical, asymmetrical, or non-symmetrical; as transitive, intransitive, and non-transitive; and as reflexive, irreflexive, and non-reflexive. Thus, for instance, a relation xRy is symmetrical when 'x' having the relation R to 'y' entails that 'y' will have the relation R to 'x'. 'Being the same size as' is a symmetrical relation while 'being older than' is an asymmetrical relation. 'Is a brother of' is a non-symmetrical relation because it is neither symmetric nor asymmetric; its formal property has to be contextually assigned. For example, 'is a brother of John' is a symmetrical relation while 'is a brother of Mary' is asymmetrical. Non-symmetrical relations may be of some, however marginal, interest to pragmatics.

Stalnaker (1999) attempts to formalize his view of the structure of speaker presupposition by means of the semantics developed by Kripke (1980). The accessibility relation should be characterized as serial, transitive, Euclidean, and non-reflexive, as follows:

The nonreflexivity of the relation reflects the important fact that the actual world in which discourse takes place need not be compatible with the context of that discourse, which is just to say that some things presupposed by a speaker may be in fact false. (1999:100)

Although correct, Stalnaker's observation is only moderately illuminating. It points to the part of pragmatics that cannot be straightforwardly formalized and demands a contextualized approach which goes beyond clear and distinct categorizations of logical relations. The relations of nonsymmetricalness and nonreflexivity constitute

the interface between semantics and pragmatics. Stalnaker also suggests that the structure of speaker presupposition is 'transitive', because it

reflects the assumption that speaker presupposition is transparent: speakers know what they are presupposing, so they presuppose that they are presupposing that P if they are, and that they are not if they are not. (1999:100)

Stalnaker's view of transparency is clearly semantic (in contrast, pragmatic transparency requires multiple-contextualization); even this, however, does not necessarily guarantee interpretative or communicative success. Even if we decide to 'enrich' our knowledge of pragmatic relations and claim that they are 'non-symmetric', 'non-reflexive' and 'non-transitive', more advanced pragmaticians complain with Goethe's Faust:

Da stehe ich nun, ich armer Tor.
Und bin so klug als wie zuvor.²

The contextual dynamics of pragmatic relations cannot be represented adequately by means of *Cartesian objects* (my term), defined as autonomous, clear and distinct entities analyzable by their essences (cf. Janicki 1999) and homogeneous, discrete features (such as symmetry, transitivity, or reflexivity). Pragmatic entities are *non-Cartesian objects*, which means that pragmatic relations should be represented as *reciprocal* and directed (uni- or bi-directional), rather than symmetrical (after all, pragmatics is not geometry). Furthermore, dynamic relations represent a type *sui generis* that exhibits specific properties and functions. Their main task is to induce transformations of initial affected (the semantic input) into contextually interpreted pragmatic output or event³. The *sine qua non* of any pragmatic phenomenon, process or action is the already mentioned *relation of co-being* that assumes a relational bond between at least two entities, such that potentially (1) one of them can affect the other – a uni-directional relation, and (2) each of them can affect the other – a bi-directional relation. '*I understand Plato*'

illustrates the former and '*They love each other*' the latter. Note also that the symmetrical relation of 'being the same size as' is significantly different from the bi-directional 'they love each other'. The first one is a Cartesian object and the second is not; people may love each other to a different degree. For this reason, '(x) loves' and '(y) loves' are not equivalent in relational pragmatics; 'love' is a fuzzy and dynamic concept, as is the notion of 'understanding'. As to the latter, human understanding depends crucially on the Individual Pragmatic Potential (IPP); therefore, the interpretation of any text (written or spoken) is usually, to some degree, subjective, being constrained by the IPP. Moreover, it is frequently the case that the affected have no *relata*, which means that the required 'knowledge' is not available in the IPP or, even worse, the affected can be related to 'non-knowledge', false knowledge or sheer ignorance (Kopytko 2001a uses the term 'structures of ignorance' for this phenomenon). As a result, misunderstanding and misinterpretation will inevitably ensue, unless the actors retrieve the missing knowledge. However, this is not always possible, because although they can successfully negotiate their interpretations with their interlocutors or find the missing facts in books or other sources, they are not likely or able to consult with the authors of philosophical works regarding the meanings of their texts.

The disjunctive logic ('either – or') of the Aristotelian principle of 'the excluded middle' can misrepresent the nature of pragmatic phenomena. Performing logical operations on non-Cartesian objects as if they were Cartesian objects will, first of all, result in the distortion and falsification of reality rather than providing some kind of approximation or model of actual phenomena. There is a vast pragmatic space between 'I do not understand Plato' and 'I understand Plato'. Proponents of many-valued logics and fuzzy sets (cf. Dubois and Prade 2000; Ragin 2000; Cheng and Pham 2001) attempt to formalize fuzzy objects by assigning them numerical values from 0.0 to 1.0. Thus, 0.0 stands for a null understanding and the other extreme value, 1.0, for the perfect or ultimate understanding. An individual's membership in such a set is a matter of degree; for instance, the present author might generously assign a value of 0.51 to his understanding of pragmatics, thus ensuring

himself a favorable membership rating by placing himself in a 'better than average' subset of the set of individuals who know what pragmatics is (or rather, should be about). This operation is not by any means unusual or bizarre. As teachers we have to assign our students to various subsets and give them grades that will specify their membership in a particular subset. In fact, in our daily life as Homo Cognoscens (HC) we have to categorize, and assign membership in a set to, all objects and individuals that we may encounter. Otherwise our cognitions, irrespective of their truth value, would not be possible⁴.

The relation of co-being reflects the potential of triggering dynamic relations between effectors and affected. The task of the trigger is to activate selected or incidental context. Any participant in verbal interaction can 'deactivate' the current context and activate a new one, for example, by saying 'I do not understand Plato'. Obviously, other events within the contextual range available to participants may launch new effectors and contexts; thus, it may start raining, or somebody may turn off the light, etc. No doubt, such events will have pragmatic consequences. The emergent effectors may to some extent determine the content and course of interaction; however, this does not imply any radical form of contextual determinism. Moreover, the fuzziness associated with concepts, relations, and social interaction contributes to the indeterminism of the pragmatic system.

The IPP rests on three major properties (1) the fuzzy concepts (sets) stored in the memory, (2) the ability to relate effectors and affected, and (3) the ability to learn, expand, modify or change (in the process of verbal interaction or individual learning) the entities in (1) and (2). Obviously, successful interpersonal communication depends decisively on the degree of overlap of the three elements in communicators. Kopytko (1998, 2001a) characterizes the IPP as incomplete, indeterminate and unstable. Pragmatic relations and social interaction belong to fuzzy, non-Cartesian objects and exhibit the features of incompleteness, indeterminateness, and instability (the so-called '3-Is'). The role of fuzziness in social interaction increases proportionately with the number of participants. The only way out of a 'fuzzy situation' is to negotiate (at least temporarily) or

impose one's categorizations or interpretations on those with a lower IPP. The ability to relate effectors to affected seems to be a complex human faculty *sui generis* that involves many cognitive systems (knowledge, reasoning, attention, memory, etc.) but also social skills, social practice, including the pragmatic consequences of specific (social) verbal interactions; this is so because each verbal interaction is new, different, and unrepeatable. All these elements (subsystems) constitute the Pragmatic Relational System, which is a part of the IPP.

Another part of the IPP is the Pragmatic Reference System. The latter comprises a dynamic library of effectors that may be activated in verbal interaction or for the purpose of text interpretation. Researchers usually use the term 'knowledge' in this connection – a term which, in my opinion, is not appropriate to pragmatics. There is little in the Pragmatic Reference System that deserves the name of knowledge (unless it is the knowledge of some basic facts relevant to the current interaction); most of this system consists of (true or false) beliefs, opinions, ignorance, false knowledge and nonsense, etc. Thus, the Pragmatic Reference System combines both 'knowledge structures' and 'ignorance structures'. The assignment of an utterance to the former or to the latter is not as straightforward as it might seem. Both 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' are fuzzy concepts with fuzzy borders. For instance, a scientific hypothesis may receive some empirical corroboration, but not enough for it to be included in the accepted knowledge of a particular science. Clearly, both knowledge and ignorance are gradable notions and can be represented on a scale. The values at the extreme poles of the scale can be easily evaluated. The real problems lie in the middle of the scale, that is, in the degree of fuzziness assigned to specific entities.

Another issue associated with the notion of 'knowledge' is that of contextualization. In the cognitive structures of Cartesian pragmatics, knowledge sits in a module and is practically isolated from other modules and their contents. In this sense, it is decontextualized. In RP, the Pragmatic Reference System is embedded in, related to, and contextualized by the cognitive-affective-conative system. Obviously, other subsystems of pragmatics such as the social and cultural are related to, and interact with, the Pragmatic

Reference System. As suggested above, both the Pragmatic Relational System and Pragmatic Reference System in the IPP are highly individualized, subjective, and characterized in terms of what I earlier called the '3-Is' (incompleteness, indeterminacy, and instability). Furthermore, both systems are socially distributed among the interactors in verbal encounters. Fortunately, each Homo Cognoscens can enrich their pragmatic reference system ad infinitum. This can be done by acquiring new items in the system from others or by HC's own creative effort. A no less welcome activity would be removing the 'rubbish' that accumulates relentlessly in the system.

In contrast to logical relations, pragmatic relations are fuzzy, gradable, dynamic, and contextualized. Moreover, they lead to actions that change the state of a pragmatic phenomenon (event). In brief, pragmatic relations may be considered as causal relations; they belong to a situation where cause precedes effect (cf. Bunge 1979). Thus, causal effectors (contexts) will produce changes in the affected (the texts). Therefore, a pragmatic relation may be characterized as a dynamic mental operation that binds effectors and affected to bring into being contextually interpreted texts (events). In this connection, Aristotle's view of causality in terms of four causes (see Aristotle's *Physics*; Barnes 1995) appears to be very illuminating for pragmatic research. The four causes can be related to the four aspects of the pragmatic system as follows: (1) the text is the 'material cause'; (2) the linguistic system is the 'formal cause'; (3) the 'final cause' (goal) is embedded in the cognitive-affective-conative system; and (4) the Individual Pragmatic Potential is the 'efficient cause'. Clearly, the final and efficient causes should be of interest to pragmatics (because they relate to goals and intentions, and to the pragmatic means of achieving them). The 'final cause' is the main topic of this paper, and it will be discussed extensively below; before that, however, the current topic, the efficient cause, deserves some more attention.

The dynamic relations between effectors and affected set in motion mental operations whose main task is to achieve the most plausible interpretation of a text. The pragmatic data processing relies on a rich input from within (the IPP, cognitive-affective-

conative system, a strong cognitive support from reasoning, attention, etc.) and from without (verbal and socio-cultural interaction, or written texts to be interpreted). Such a situation is a constant source of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or communicative failure, and language users have a problem here. First, they must establish the correct relations between effectors and affected within the activated context (obviously, there is no guarantee that they activate the appropriate context correctly) and then, on the basis of these relations, draw adequate inferences to arrive at an interpretation (event), just as it is done in deductive argument. Usually, interpreters, in accordance with the 'principle of least effort', start pragmatic processing with the default meaning (cf. Holland et al. 1986) stored in their IPP; if a problem or error appears, they resume processing and reanalyze the available data (effectors) and come up with a new interpretation. As a result, the default meaning is *superseded* by the outcome of the reanalysis, and the basic pragmatic relation responsible for triggering the mental operations proposed above is that of *supersession* (my term). The dynamic, pragmatic relation of supersession overrides the default meaning and replaces it with a more plausible reading that takes into account the changes or modifications brought about by the activated effectors. Evidently, supersession is a cyclic, dynamic relation that may optionally be applied ad infinitum (or, more precisely, recursively) until some satisfying interpretation of a text is arrived at. The cyclic supersession may be represented as $[T - R_1 - S_1, T - R_2 - S_2, \dots, T - R_n - S_n]$, where T stands for text, R_i for relation and S_i for supersession (both goal and result of R).

It should be noted in this connection that social actors in verbal encounters have to engage in the analytic (cognitive) processing of information, which is socially distributed in the extrinsic context and, in some measure, socially constructed. Thus, in addition to superseding the automatic (default) interpretations of texts (which may prove to be inadequate or false), they have to integrate the socially dispersed and fragmented pragmatic situation by way of synthesizing the distributed (contextual elements) to arrive at some plausible pragmatic interpretation of the situation. Evidently, such a

dynamic, complex, cognitive process of *synthesis-through-analysis* is initiated by the operation of the cognitive and affective analysis, which produces an input to the synthetic processes in the brain.

In everyday discourse, we may suggest various 'hypotheses' or interpretations in order to answer the question: 'What did she/he mean by saying that?' Similarly, in written discourse, we may be baffled by the constant interpretations and reinterpretations of philosophical or religious texts throughout the centuries and millennia, with little hope of stopping this practice. After all, each new generation of human beings wants to have their own interpretations of those texts and new translations of the classics. Without supersession, the pragmatic interpretation of texts could neither be performed nor comprehended. In the following quotations from William Shakespeare, supersession saves the face of the addressees: 'Do not weep, good fools, There is no cause' (*Winter Tale*, Act 2, Scene 1. 118-119) and 'And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!' (*King Lear*, Act 5, Scene 3. 305). In both instances, the speakers do not intend to offend their addressees; rather, they wish to show pity and use terms of endearment such as 'good fool' and 'poor fool'. In an ironic context, an utterance like 'You are a genius!' illustrates a radical form of supersession, namely a polite way of saying quite the opposite than the literal meaning. This reversal of meaning has very important theoretical and philosophical implications: it shows clearly that it is the relation that is responsible for the semantic change, and not the properties of the lexical items in the utterance, because the (semantic) properties of 'genius' do not indicate that it can mean a 'fool' or an 'idiot', if the need arises. Here, the relation of supersession can contextually 'superimpose' new meanings on lexical items or assign novel illocutionary force to an utterance. Thus, the ancient controversy about properties vs. relations may find important evidence in pragmatic data.

So far, the following types of pragmatic relations have been proposed: The 'relation of co-being', the 'uni- and bi-(multi-) directional relations', and the 'relation of supersession'. Obviously, these are relations of a very general type that subsume various subsets of more specific relations, to be accounted for in Relational Pragmatics. For the purpose of this paper, several other pragmatic

relations also deserve attention, first of all, the relation of 'co-agency' and that of 'bi-contextuality' (both associated with the set of bi-directional relations). The relation of co-agency refers to the situation of bi-directional causality, by which participants in verbal interaction such as a discussion, quarrel, or debate may bring about changes in their respective IPPs and cognitive-affective-conative systems. The changes do not have to be permanent; nonetheless, they are crucial for the current course of an interaction.

The relation of bi-(multi-)contextuality is another important member of the set of bi-(multi-)directional relations; it implies two actors (in a binary relation) with their specific, subjective IPPs participating in the interaction; thus, we may have, in addition to bi-contextuality, tri-..., n-contextuality, or in general 'multi-contextuality'. It should also be noted that bi-contextuality (as a binary relation) in addition characterizes the relation between interpreters and written texts. Bi-contextuality is based on the subjective IPPs (or alternatively on the different pragmabilities of participants); it is responsible for all cases and types of human communication (including miscommunication) on the one hand, and creativity in communication and interpretation on the other. As to uni-contextuality, this might refer to the idealized (and practically impossible) situation when actors in interaction are endowed with the same IPPs. More complex types of relations (which, actually, dominate in pragmatics), will be referred to as 'relational clusters', such as the cognitive-affective-conative cluster or the interactant-language-context cluster. Obviously, the two relational clusters represent a highly universal and abstract level of pragmatic analysis. At a less general level, researchers will be interested in the relational structure of the interactants, context, cognition, conation, and other elements. A holistic, pragmatic analysis has to investigate hierarchies of multi-relational clusters and interactions between and within them.

The fuzzy pragmatic system is dependent on other mental systems such as the cognitive, affective, or conative, but first of all on the linguistic system (phonological, morpho-syntactic, and semantic). Pragmatic relations can be investigated by their form, relational properties, functions, dynamics (as presented above),

history, goals, and effects. The latter five features differentiate pragmatic from logical relations. In particular with respect to goals, modern philosophers of mind, following Brentano's revival of the scholastic term *intentio* (cf. Lyons 1995), prefer to use the term *intentionality* rather than that of goals, suggested above; here, Relational Pragmatics can offer a significant contribution to the philosophy of intentionality. Mental relations are intentional on the one hand and teleological or effect-oriented on the other. Their intentionality has to do with relating effectors to affected, with a view towards teleological success in the form of an appropriate event or understanding of text.

In brief, then, Relational Pragmatics is the science of the dynamic relations that lead to the act of understanding as based on first, the cognitive ability to understand (which is, to some extent innate), and second, the social-cultural practice that shapes and enriches our cognitive potential. Understanding is a relational concept that requires an object or content to which it refers. Ideally, each language user encodes a text in such a way that the addressee understands its content in accordance with the addressor's intentions. On the other hand, the addressees decode texts from their own point of view that includes their IPPs, goals, intentions, emotions, etc. Understanding being a fuzzy entity, it may also fall prey to the 3-Is (incompleteness, indeterminacy, and instability) that may occasionally lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Moreover, persuasiveness or expressiveness of texts is a matter of degree and for this reason the hopes associated with them may simply not be fulfilled.

Finally, there are texts addressed, first of all to (1) emotions (i.a. persuasion, propaganda, etc.), (2) reason (scholarly texts), or (3) both (1) and (2), as in the case of literary texts, criticism, etc. The IPPs must be able to assign correct relations between texts and the components of the cognitive-affective-conative systems so as to arrive at an appropriate understanding. But even in case this assignment fails, texts addressed to the affective system will still (more or less) achieve their objectives whenever the critical cognitive system (reason) is not (or insufficiently) involved in the process of understanding. The latter implicates an operation of a

chain of interrelated systems and relations including the following: the text – T, the linguistic system – LS, the individual pragmatic potential – IPP, the cognitive-affective-conative system – CAC, consciousness – CNS and neural reactions – NR. A sequence of relations may be represented symbolically as [T – LS – IPP – CAC – CNS – NR]. It should be noted, however, that in addition to this linear sequence of relations characteristic of pragmatics, the latter is also the proper domain of non-linear phenomena (in such cases, the order and the number of elements of the sequence may change, for instance, in the affective context).

The fundamental feature of pragmatics is its relational mode of being, which can be represented as a scalar, relational dynamics: from the most stable (or rather metastable) 'relations of co-being' to dynamic supersession. As a matter of fact, pragmatics has no 'content' of its own; it operates on the semantic input (texts) to produce events, or the semantic output (pragmatically interpreted texts). Interpreted texts are of no interest to pragmatics, inasmuch as they become items or objects in a specific semantic domain. Thus, the crucial role of pragmatics seems to be that of assigning objects from the semantic universe (of all possible meanings that can be associated with an object-text (input)) to specific semantic domains (output) by establishing their most plausible meanings on the basis of the available relations between effectors and affected. In other words, pragmatics is the relational 'bridge' that connects two semantic states – a very complex bridge that is constructed from physical, mental, social, cultural, and interactional relations. Once you cross the bridge, it mysteriously disappears, but if need arises you can easily construct another one (if you are a skillful and imaginative engineer) and see where it will take you.

As stated above, Relational Pragmatics focuses on causal relations rather than on the linguistic/semantic 'content'. The positive goal of relational dynamics is that of 'understanding'; its negative end is 'misunderstanding', 'misinterpretation', or 'uncertainty'; all four terms refer to 'cognitive relations' between Homo Cognoscens and texts, phenomena, events, etc. Furthermore, and interestingly enough, pragmatic relations seem to be teleologically related to a number of cognitive relations. (It should be noted that the former

constitute a subset of the latter.) In addition to a variety of cognitive relations, the rich 'mental world' offers its hospitality to a plethora of affective and conative relations (that affect pragmatic relations) such as attachment, commitment, curiosity, hate, interest, involvement, love, etc.

3. Conclusion

In the preceding, the pragmatic context has been considered as a (causal) relation between effectors (cause) and events (effect). The principle 'no relation, no context' (and its reverse 'no context, no relation') has been shown to be valid for Relational Pragmatics; accordingly, the investigation of language use in a 'pancontextual' framework (see section 1) calls for a relational view of pragmatics. Pragmatic relations are of a different sort than those of traditional, logico-semantic descent (such as the symmetric, reflexive, or transitive ones). The former belong to a set of causal relations of a specific type: compared to the deductive-nomological causality claimed for some of the 'hard sciences' (*pace* Cartwright 1983), the relations in the mental, social, cultural, and interactional 'worlds' are clearly less predictable and should be accorded the status of human, rather than natural causality. Human causality depends critically on the interactional dynamics between the mind and its relational context. In addition to the ontological relation of 'co-being', the basic set of causal relations in RP includes (1) uni- and bi-(multi)-directional relations (reciprocity), (2) the relation of 'supersession', (3) 'co-agency', (4) 'bi-(multi)-contextuality', and (5) 'relational clusters'. Obviously, this basic set of general pragmatic relations does not exhaust the inventory of all possible dynamic relations that constitute the field of pragmatics. Therefore, it may only be considered a first step towards a more comprehensive account.

Relational Pragmatics is characterized as the study of the language user's pragmability, that is, the faculty of contextual language use and pragmatic interpretation of texts. Pragmability subsumes two faculties: the Universal Pragmatic Potential (UPP) and the Individual Pragmatic Potential (IPP). The latter is analyzed in

terms of the Pragmatic Reference System and the Pragmatic Relational System. In RP, context is viewed as dynamic causal relations between effectors and affected.

In contrast to other approaches to pragmatics and discourse analysis, Relational Pragmatics does not only (tacitly or by its definition of pragmatics) assume the presence of relations in pragmatic phenomena, but first of all it attempts to investigate them in the framework of the Pragmatic Relational System and of its dynamic relations with the Pragmatic Reference System. Such a change of perspective from the relatively static ideas of knowledge, situation, and text to the operation of relations accounts for a range of dynamic interactional phenomena associated with human communication as well as interaction with, and interpretation of, a variety of texts. Thus, such communicative problems as misunderstanding, misinterpretation (or pragmatic emergent phenomena including *faux pas*, verbal conflict, face threatening acts, etc.) come into being, most of the time, as a result of 'relational failures' (that is, contextually inadequate relating of effectors and affected rather than the sheer lack of specific knowledge). In other words, the presence of the required knowledge (stored in the Pragmatic Reference System) does not guarantee a communicative success. The latter depends primarily on the 'relational work' between the Pragmatic Relational System and the Pragmatic Reference System. Similarly, the interpretation and understanding of any complex academic (scholarly or philosophical texts) relies first of all on the progressive, successful relational work within the available Pragmatic Reference System. Obviously, in the case of an interpretative breakdown we have to increase our (knowledge) Pragmatic Reference System by having recourse to other sources of desirable knowledge (e.g. stored in books, CD-ROMs, the Internet, or in the Pragmatic Reference Systems of competent specialists). The above mentioned phenomena possess an empirical interface and can be subjected to careful investigation.

It should also be noted that the focus on relations in pragmatics clearly demarcates the boundary between the semantic and pragmatic relations and phenomena.

Obviously, this introductory account does not exhaust the issue of relations in pragmatics. The most urgent task now is the investigation of pragmatic relations in the socio-cultural context (for an account of relations in the affective context see Kopytko, forthcoming). We may predict that (1) such relations possess properties *sui generis*; (2) that their role, importance, and interrelations with the mental relations (as suggested above) will undoubtedly throw a new light on the analysis of pragmatic relations; and (3) that such an account will certainly raise the question of the objectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity of human communication.

Finally, it should be noted that the relationalism advocated in the view of pragmatics discussed above is implicitly present in other methodological approaches to scientific research, such as structuralism and functionalism; this is so because (1) structures are composed of related elements, and (2) structures are related to specific functions. As a result, specific relations evidently underlie both structures and functions. Therefore, the ordered sequence (as indicated by the arrows below) of progressively more complex (and hierarchically organized) relational dependencies between the three methodological approaches may be presented as follows: Relationalism \emptyset Structuralism \emptyset Functionalism.

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Notes

1. I would like to thank Prof. Jacob L. Mey for his invaluable contribution to the final shape of this paper.
2. In Jacob L. Mey's translation (made especially for this occasion), the thought is rendered as follows:
Now, as a simple fool, before you here I stand.
Now, just as much as then, I seem to understand.
3. This task bears close resemblance to the problem solving procedures as described (e.g. by Newell & Simon 1972).
4. An alternative to the fuzzy view of pragmatic phenomena advocated here is postmodern relativism (cf. Kopytko 2001b), which

rejects Cartesianism and structuralism; but unfortunately, its positive agenda has not much to offer.

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