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Relationship thinking and human pragmatics

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Abstract

The approach to pragmatics explored in this article focuses on elements of social interaction which are of universal relevance, and which may provide bases for a comparative approach. The discussion is anchored by reference to a fragment of conversation from a video-recording of Lao speakers during a home visit in rural Laos. The following points are discussed. First, an understanding of the full richness of context is indispensable for a proper understanding of any interaction. Second, human relationships are a primary locus of social organization, and as such constitute a key focus for pragmatics. Third, human social intelligence forms a universal cognitive under-carriage for interaction, and requires careful cross-cultural study. Fourth, a neo-Peircean framework for a general understanding of semiotic processes gives us a way of stepping away from language as our basic analytical frame. It is argued that in order to get a grip on pragmatics across human groups, we need to take a comparative approach in the biological sense—i.e. with reference to other species as well. From this perspective, human pragmatics is about using semiotic resources to try to meet goals in the realm of social relationships.
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1. Introduction

I want to explore an approach to pragmatics which gives equal attention to public practices and private processes: an approach which is both socially and cognitively grounded. The aim is to forge coherent links between indispensable yet institutionally disparate concerns within the range of (sub)disciplines centered on human social-communicative behavior: ethnographic and other contextual background, grammatical and other semiotic structure, cognitive processes of representation and inference, social action and its moral-emotional temperance, relationships and second-order relations between those relationships, and biologically comparative perspectives on human behavior.

In order to anchor the discussion where possible, let us begin with a fragment of data from a video-recording made by the author while on field work in Laos in July 2002.[1] Fig. 1 is an image from the video.

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[1] The cultural community of interest here is the Lao-speaking population of the lowlands of the country, particularly around the Vientiane Plain. (There are many dozens of other ethnolinguistic groups in Laos; Enfield, 2006a.)

Fig. 1. Still image from data fragment, village visit, Haat Pha-in Village, Vientiane Prefecture, Laos. Participants are two married couples: A and B are the hosts, C and D are visitors; C is the elder sister of A and B's daughter-in-law.

(1)   Data fragment
        After eight minutes of talk at the beginning of a conversation between the four people pictured in Fig. 1
        *(with some participation from others), there are signs of a lull in the progression of the conversation,
        and then[2]:*

1   A   **qoo4 veej5**
        INTJ   FAC.EMPH
        'Oh, so. . .' *((sighing))*
2   (1.5)
3   C   **mùø-khùùn2 phen1 kaø   thoo2 maa2, saaw3 daaw3 hanø**
        last night   3SG.P   T.LNK phone come, MYZ   Dao   TPC.DIST
        'So last night she called, that Aunty Dao.'
4   A   **mbòq5**
        INTJ
        'Is that right?'
5   C   **mm5**
        INTJ
        'Yeah.'
6   B   **phen1 vaa1 ñang3**
        3SG.P   say   INDEF.INAN
        'What did she say?'
        B*'s question in Line 6 is addressed to C, who then launches into an extended turn at talk, relating what it
        was that Dao said, and opening up discussion of the business of the day, before walking to the temple
        to inspect progress of construction.*

    Extract (1) is an utterly normal, everyday piece of interaction. It is packed with pragmatic puzzles. What are these
people doing and how are they doing it? Language is at the heart of it, and to know what is happening here we need to
have learnt at least some of the conventions of the Lao language.

    Here, in the structural codes of language, is where human groups vary most. In phonetics, phonology, morphology,
syntax, and semantics, the analyst is overwhelmed with human difference, whether reveling in such difference or

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[2] Abbreviations in glosses: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, DIST = distal, EMPH = emphatic, FAC = factive, INAN = inanimate, INDEF = indefinite pronoun, INFER = inferred, INTJ = interjection, MYZ = mother's younger sister, P = polite, QPLR = polar question marker, SG = singular, T.LNK = topic linker, TPC = topic marker. See Enfield (2007a) for a description of the Lao language.

struggling to generalize across it. But in pragmatics or language USE, less is known about the extent to which human groups differ. What else in Extract (1) beyond the Lao grammar and lexicon employed would need to be learnt specific to this community? Or are the pragmatic principles generic? Some analysts argue for virtually limitless variation in pragmatic organization, while others posit universal principles. But as in so many intellectual arguments which polarize on dichotomies, when pushed, no-one will seriously challenge the correctness of either view some part of the time. Yes, there are general principles of human interaction. For instance, in all cultures people will have ways of dealing with problems in speaking, hearing and understanding, and with the organization of turns at talk and other aspects of conversational sequence (cf. Schegloff, 1968, 2006, 2007; Sacks et al., 1974; Goodwin, 1981, 2000, 2006a,b).[3] In no culture will people always take literally everything that is explicitly said, without enriching context-situated understandings through inferential and indexical processes (Grice, 1957, 1975, 1989; Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Hanks, 1989, 1990, 1996; Levinson, 2000). That is to say, it is always possible to convey meaning beyond what is overtly coded. And yes, there are cultural and sub-cultural differences in style of interaction and interpretation. Interaction may be culturally distinct in style due to differences in ideology of the individual's role in society, or in the interpretation of modes of language use such as sarcasm, directness, or formality (cf. Gumperz and Hymes, 1972/1986; Bauman and Sherzer, 1974; Gumperz, 1982; Duranti, 2001, 2004; Lakoff and Ide, 2005; Goddard, 2006, among many others). The question for analysis is how best to balance the two—the generic or universal on the one hand, and the local or particular on the other. And critically, how are the generic and the local related?

These questions demand interdisciplinary attention, because no single research tradition is concerned with more than a slice of the full set of issues. Compare the concerns of General Linguistics, Semantics, Pragmatics, Conversation Analysis, Linguistic Anthropology, Psycholinguistics, among many more. I do not aim to unpick, reconcile, or otherwise meta-analyze existing disciplinary traditions of studying pragmatics across the world's thousands of cultural contexts. Instead, I want to explore a multiply-grounded view of human interaction, with the hope that this will yield a logic to the common problem space of pragmatics across human groups. It is in part an attempt to avoid unwanted presuppositions which typically arise when an analyst presumes one or another human culture as their beginning reference point. I agree with the call by Lakoff and Ide (2005:11) for caution against overconfidence in cross-cultural applicability of analytic claims about human interaction. But I am not sure that native participants are the final arbiters in analysis of their own cultures. Insiders have insights that outsiders lack, and vice versa (Ameka, 2006). This is true not only with respect to the cultures under study, but also the intellectual cultures through whose spectacles we are trained to look.

2. Context

To understand what is communicated by samples of code such as the linguistic items in Extract (1), context matters deeply (Jakobson, 1960; Austin, 1962; Hymes, 1964; Silverstein, 1976; Hanks, 1990, 1996, 2005a; Duranti and Goodwin, 1992). With the relevant biographic, ethnographic, and historical background, the data will begin to take on new meaning.

The setting for Extract (1) is the house of A and B in a rural village called Haat Pha-In (which means 'Sandbank of the Lord Indra'). It is a Sunday, which by the international calendar is a day of rest. By the Lao lunar calendar, days of rest are reckoned differently. It is therefore not a day of rest for local villagers, but it is a day of rest for those who have day jobs in the city. This is relevant because A and B are hosting a visit on this day by people from the city with day jobs. It is primarily a business visit, but the business is personal, hence the visitors' need to come on a day off.

A and B's son is married to a woman from near Vientiane city. The couple fled Laos in the early post-revolutionary period (from late 1970s to early 1980s; see Stuart-Fox, 1986, 1997; Evans, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2002), and eventually settled in the United States. There, the couple's below-middle income is high by Lao standards. As Theravada Buddhists, they are motivated to make acts of devotion by which they may accrue *boun* or 'merit', considered to counteract the effects of *baap* 'sin' and ill fortune. The accrual of merit is an investment in better fortune in one's next incarnation (Tambiah, 1970). Merit is regularly accrued through participation in community ritual (e.g. giving alms to the village monks, attending the temple for various events in the ritual calendar, such as Buddhist Lent or Lao New Year),

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[3] It is often claimed that the organization of talk in some cultures does not respect principles of turn organization as described by Sacks et al. (1974). In most cases, such claims are yet to be empirically tested (Schegloff, 2000:2, 47–48; de Ruiter et al., 2006:516). Sidnell (2001) falsifies one such claim with reference to conversational data from a Caribbean English Creole.

but larger gestures may be performed ad hoc, by donations to the local temple, and especially for improvements and additions to temple buildings, where monks live, study, and work, and where most of village ritual life is carried out (cf. Tambiah, 1970; Sparkes, 2005, on the same traditions in the Lao-speaking area of northeast Thailand). For example, one might ostensibly 'donate' some prominent part of the main public temple building such as a decorated pillar, or one of the panels on the inner walls from the Vesandara Epic. (These painted scenes run around the walls of the temples much like the Stations of the Cross, but it is a journey to enlightenment rather than death and resurrection.) This buys the privilege to have one's name and degree of generosity (as a money amount) painted on the temple wall, standing as a persistent advertisement of one's merit. Naturally, the more one donates, the more merit one accrues.

A key piece of background information for interpreting Extract (1) is that the son and daughter-in-law of A and B – the couple who live in the US – are funding a project to build new living quarters for monks at the village temple at Haat Pha-in. The project has begun, but is not complete, and has run into logistical problems to do with plumbing. Since the son and daughter-in-law in the US are providing the funding, all decisions regarding the project must be approved by them. More accurately, since in the Lao home economy it is women who 'traditionally have held the family purse strings' (Ireson, 1996:60 and passim), A and B's daughter-in-law is the key person. (Her name is Dao—she is the referent of the person-referring expressions in Lines 3 and 6 of Extract (1).) This alone puts A and B in a position of diminished power. On the one hand, they stand to be proximal beneficiaries of the merit generated in this project, if not spiritually, then in terms of local social standing, since they are the locally visible agents of this significant gesture. On the other hand, they are not in direct control of the key resources, since it is not their son calling the shots, but his wife, the daughter-in-law. Worse than this, A and B do not have direct access to their daughter-in-law to negotiate progress of the project, and in particular, transfer of the money. Instead, her elder sister (C in Fig. 1), who lives in Vientiane city and who has a telephone at her house, is the go-between. The elder sister is the one who places and receives telephone calls to and from the US to discuss progress of the project and to organize the transfer of money. The upshot is that C is the key power broker in Fig. 1. The reason she is making this visit to the village is to inspect the building operations in order to report back to A and B's daughter-in-law (her own sister), ostensibly to make sure that the money is being spent correctly. The sister/daughter-in-law (C) is in a win-win position, accruing primary merit both spiritually and in terms of social standing, yet not having to sacrifice her own financial resources.

Accompanying her on this visit are her husband (D), her niece and a friend, a son-in-law of A and B, who lives in Vientiane city and who has provided transport and driving, and the ethnographer (holding the camera and ignored during this part of the recording). The video is rolling from the beginning of the visit, i.e. from when the group first arrive at the house.

The first 8 min of the sequence consist of greetings and updates, mostly focusing on troubles-telling[4] by A and B. A has injured himself falling from a ladder, and is recuperating. B, his wife, has been treating him to recovery. There is extended discussion of the circumstances of the accident, and of treatments, including traditional physiotherapy and herbal medicines (cf. Enfield, 2006b for further discussion of this section of the encounter). Some of this medicine (bark and roots) is shared with D, who sets about preparing it for consumption, grinding it into a solution. (He is visibly busy with this in Fig. 1.) As is customary, the women prepare betel-nut packages and begin to chew (also visible in Fig. 1).

After 8 min of phatic communion, there are signs of a lull in the talk, a winding down of progressivity in the conversation. This lull brings into painfully pregnant prominence the already mutually known reason for the visit. This is where Extract (1) begins. It is where Dao, the sister and daughter-in-law, is mentioned for the first time, and where the business of the day comes into focus.

Knowing all of this has significant consequences for our understanding of what is happening in Extract (1), and most importantly, for the participants' own understandings. Also of critical relevance are the social-relational statuses which pertain among these people. Let us turn to those as we explore the pragmatics of Extract (1).

3. Relationship thinking

I want to pursue a *relationship thinking* approach to human pragmatics (Hinde, 1976, 1997; Ingold, 1990). By this I mean both a kind of thinking that analysts should apply when trying to understand human interaction, and a kind of

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[4] On troubles-telling as a social-interactional practice, see Jefferson and Lee (1980), Cohen (1999), Pomerantz and Mandelbaum (2005).

cognition that fosters human interaction, language, and culture. I agree with Ingold (1990) on the idea of culture as a 'logic of relationships' (p. 225) where proper analysis requires 'relationships thinking' (p. 208). This is in line with the views of biologists such as Dunbar (1988:2) and Hinde (1976, 1982, 1991), and early comparative anthropologists like Linton (1936).[5]

At the core of our social world is the maintenance of relationships entailed by living in a special kind of social system (Linton, 1936:113; de Waal and Tyack, 2003; see below). As Linton (1936) outlined, social statuses are 'polar' in that they define relations between people. These relationships are not simply dyadic. What is special about how humans and other higher primates think about relationships is that we are capable of cognitively representing not just the dyadic relationships that we enter into with others, but the dyadic relationships *between others*, and further, in second-order terms, how those relationships between others stand with reference to *our own* relationships with those others. Once we recognize the capacity to represent not just relationships but *relations between relationships* (how one relationship is related to another relationship, and what that tells us), we derive powerful modes of thinking about meaning (Kockelman, 2005).

A relationship thinking approach takes communicative interactions as a key locus (Hinde, 1976; Dunbar, 1988:12 and passim). Each interaction enacts a specific, token relationship (e.g. between me and my brother Matt) as well as a type of relationship (e.g. between a man and his brother). Types of relationship in turn define types of social statuses and identities which will be key elements of higher-level social structure (Linton, 1936:113ff; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Lévi-Strauss, 1953; Nadel, 1957; Hinde, 1976; Sacks, 1992; Dunbar and Spoors, 1995; Hill and Dunbar, 2003; Pomerantz and Mandelbaum, 2005; Enfield and Levinson, 2006).

Higher-level or second-order social structure emerges out of the interplay of both negatively and positively valenced forces of relationship-grounded social behavior. On the one hand, there are positive pro-social instincts that license trust, compassion, and common identity (Henrich et al., 2004; Boyd and Richerson, 2006). On the other hand are the Machiavellian instincts that license competition, deception, and social distinction (Byrne and Whiten, 1988; Whiten and Byrne, 1997). In social interaction, humans are not only interested in (ritually or otherwise) reducing damage and promoting bonding (Huxley, 1966:258), but are often equally interested in marking boundaries and establishing social difference (Goodwin, 1990:141ff, 2006a,b; cf. Goffman, 1959, 1967). However, these ostensibly contrastive forces are not always easily distinguished: in one frame, an act of altruism (e.g. spending time and money helping a stranger) can be seen in another frame as selfish (depriving those closer to you of your valuable resources). How it looks depends on which social unit of analysis we take— the individual? the dyad? the triad? the family? the ethnic group? These would each be relevant in different contexts.

The idea of relationship thinking is for the analyst to regard human relationships as a key locus of analysis. While at higher levels of abstraction, social structure can vary enormously across cultures, the fundamental site at which we observe the development and maintenance of such structure is in the co-present interactions by which (types of) relationships are concretely enacted (Hinde, 1976; Dunbar, 1988), and in the special cognition by which we are able to represent and process not just these relationships but *relations between these relationships* (Byrne and Whiten, 1988; Kockelman, 2005). The (types of) relationships enacted in interaction co-define the roles and identities that will ultimately define the sociology and ethnography of a community.

The relevant relationship types may be of two broad varieties, which I shall call externally grounded and reciprocally grounded, respectively. (Note: These are not mutually exclusive!) If A and B stand in an externally grounded relationship, then their relationship is defined by how they each stand towards some external reference point (with some associated set of definitive rights and responsibilities). For instance, if A and B are both members of the local cricket club, this is a potential basis for defining a relationship between them through external grounding. Such relations may be negatively defined as well, where A and B stand differently toward the external reference point. This type of relationship is also referred to as segmentary (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Note that in an externally grounded relationship, the relationship between A and B is not a necessary consequence of their each standing in that way to the external ground. By contrast, if A and B stand in a reciprocally grounded relationship, then the rights and responsibilities associated with A and B's incumbency in that relationship are mutually defined: for example, if A is B's father, B is necessarily A's child.

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[5] Unlike Ingold I do not see this as a substitute for population thinking (a concept attributed to Darwin: Mayr, 1964:xix–xx; Mayr, 1970; Mayr, 1982:45–47; see Hinde, 1991:585–586). Relationship thinking and population thinking are not incompatible.

3.1. Human societies are relationship-grounded societies

Humans are among many species whose behavior is organized around what de Waal and Tyack (2003) call individualized, longitudinal society. By describing human society as 'individualized', they mean that 'members recognize each other individually and form variable relationships built on histories of interaction' (de Waal and Tyack, 2003:x). Importantly, this is independent of any notion of individualism as a cultural value or ideology (as, for example, often attributed to Anglo or 'Western' culture). What is common to all cultures is that society is made up of distinct, mobile, mortals, who are not telepathic, and whose interactions must therefore be managed by semiotic means. That is, manipulation of others in the social world involves the use of signs as tools to cause others' minds and bodies to be affected in relatively predictable ways, to relatively predictable ends. Local ideologies of the relation between person and society are distinct from this general fact, yet may be constrained by it. By describing human society as 'longitudinal' (or 'longitudinally stable'), de Waal and Tyack (2003) mean that 'species with long life spans have long-term or multigenerational relationships, such as those between grandparents and grand-offspring or friendships among adults going back to youth' (cf. Dunbar, 1988).

I will adopt the perspective proposed by de Waal and Tyack, but I use the term relationship-grounded instead of individualized, to more accurately capture the point (cf. Hinde, 1976). Life in a relationship-grounded society presents each individual member with a common set of problems of social life. At some level and to some degree, many of these social problems (and possibly their best solutions) may be shared with creatures of other relationship-grounded societies such as those of elephants, bottlenose dolphins, spotted hyenas, baboons, and capuchin monkeys (Dunbar, 1988; Sussman and Chapman, 2004; de Waal and Tyack, 2003).[6] Of course, we humans have our own species-unique problems and solutions, but it is critical to consider our position as part of the biological world (Hinde, 1982, 1991; Boesch, 2007, among many others).

4. Human social intelligence

The participants in Extract (1) are in a particular culturally and historically specific context, and in a particular kind of social world, as defined, in part, by species-specific determinants such as pro-social instincts, social intelligence capacities, and structural constraints on social group size and relationship intensity (cf. Richerson and Boyd, 2005; Whiten and Byrne, 1997; Hill and Dunbar, 2003). But the individual participants are at the same time mobile agents in this world, each with their own properties as individuals, each with their own bodies and minds. The sketch of contextual background in section 1, above, has given us a sense of what is now in public view thanks to the cultural, historical, and biographical context. Consider now what the participants bring to the table cognitively.

Complex social life demands (and enables) complex social cognition (Jolly, 1966; Humphrey, 1976; Byrne and Whiten, 1988; Tomasello, 1999; de Waal and Tyack, 2003; Carpendale and Lewis, 2006, inter alia). People are equipped with a rich suite of cognitive capacities which for convenience may be referred to as social intelligence. This is not a single capacity or ability or faculty, but a cluster of related cognitive abilities. Consider some of the capacities that different research traditions have focused on, suggesting the kind of social intelligence that a model of human pragmatics must presuppose (Carruthers and Smith, 1996; Carpendale and Lewis, 2006; Enfield and Levinson, 2006, inter alia)[7]:

- perspective-taking (awareness of others' perceptual states)
- false belief understanding (truth vs. people's representations of it)
- pro-social instincts (altruism, group living, ethnic co-membership)
- cooperative instincts (capacity for flexible joint action toward a mutual goal)
- Machiavellian instincts (dominance, coalition-building, manipulation, ethnic distinction)
- intention–recognition (attribution of knowledge, belief, desires)
- an intentional stance (intention–attribution to the non-mental realm)
- management and exploitation of mutual knowledge (Schelling thinking)

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[6] This does not apply to other complex societies such as those of the ants, since they are not 'individualized' in de Waal and Tyack's sense.

[7] These are not necessarily distinct qualitatively capacities—the list merely represents a range of different takes on social intelligence from a range of disciplinary traditions.

- a flexible symbolic capacity (sensitivity to social convention)
- docile cultural instincts (propensity to adopt the norms of one's group)
- socially-anchored emotional and moral instincts (motives to adhere to and regulate social norms)

These are presumed to reflect universal human capacities, definitive of the cognitive style of our species. But there has been little serious testing of their robustness across cultures (i.e. whether these capacities are generically present in individuals in any community), and next to nothing is known of their cultural permeability (i.e. whether differences in cultural setting may affect the development of such capacities in children). Cultural inflection of social intelligence is a matter for empirical research.

5. Semiotic tools for assessment and management

Communication is a species of social action which involves interdependent processes of assessment and management (Krebs and Dawkins, 1984; Owings and Morton, 1998). Utterances and their equivalents are ways of bringing about effects on the world, both in the celebrated sense of transforming social statuses as in rites of passage (Austin, 1962) and in the more workaday processes of transforming mental states, as all signs do (Kockelman, 2005, 2006a,b). Any individual has capacities to assess their environment, that is to perceptually explore their surroundings and thereby know new things of consequence (e.g. what to pursue, what to avoid). Individuals also act upon or manage their environment. One way of managing the environment is by brute force wielded upon physical objects (say, chopping wood for fire). In a social setting, however, the most important components of our environment are other people. In pragmatics, we study how people use controlled signifying behavior in order to manage their environment by bringing about effects upon the mental states (intentional states, emotions, habitus, etc.) of social associates. Like all (relationship-grounded) social creatures, we carry out social action by employing ritualized means of communication (Huxley, 1966) which affect the world through causing changes in others' inner states (as opposed to actions which have effects on the world by brute force; cf. Searle, 1969). In managing the social environment in this way, a 'sender' presupposes and exploits other individuals' strategies for management of the social environment (Krebs and Dawkins, 1984; Owings and Morton, 1998).

As analysts, we therefore want to have a clear sense of what these exploitable strategies of assessment are. They will include social intelligence capacities along the lines discussed in section 4, above. These are powerful means for assessing the social world, tools for 'reading' other minds (Byrne and Whiten, 1988; Baron-Cohen, 1995; Enfield and Levinson, 2006, inter alia).[8] In the case of humans, the presupposed capacities for assessment will also include massive second-order knowledge of the structured semiotic systems known as grammar and culture.

In this section, I want to consider more general powers of assessment through perception, action, and interpretation, yielding a rich semiotic scheme for extracting meaning from the world (following Kockelman, 2005, 2006a,b; cf. Peirce, 1965/1932). The details of this scheme are important to even a rudimentary understanding of meaning. If we are going to get a grip on human pragmatics from a comparative perspective, we must have a framework for the technologies of meaning which are available to human individuals and groups, and indeed which are operative in Extract (1).

We may first assume a distinction between sign, object, and interpretant. To avoid confusion I shall use the subscript 'ts' to indicate that I intend these terms in a technical sense. A $sign_{ts}$ is anything that is or can be interpreted by someone to stand for something else. An $object_{ts}$ is the 'something else' that a $sign_{ts}$ is taken to stand for.[9] The relation of standing-for which pertains between a $sign_{ts}$ and an $object_{ts}$ may be iconic, indexical, and symbolic.[10]

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[8] These are also applied in the non-social world (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Goody, 1995; Atran, 2002).

[9] This technical use of the term object does not mean 'physical object', but refers to a signified idea or concept, which need not correspond to some physical object.

[10] These may be defined as follows. If A stands iconically for B, it is because A has qualities in common with B (as an ink-pattern ✍ may stand for the hand). If A stands indexically for B, it is because A is actually connected to B (as red spots may stand for measles). If A stands symbolically for B, it is because people in a community normatively treat A as standing for B (as the phonetic sequence [kʰæt] stands for 'cat', independent of any relation of likeness or actual connection between the $sign_{ts}$ [kʰæt] and the $object_{ts}$ 'cat'). Note that the symbolic relation is not a residual category, despite it being widely defined as such. If a symbolic relation holds between A and B, it is not that 'neither physical similarity nor contextual contiguity hold', rather that similarity and contiguity are not what primarily CAUSE A to stand for B. Symbols may (and usually do) display iconic-indexical relations between $sign_{ts}$ and $object_{ts}$, it's just that they need not.

Distinguishing and monitoring these three ways of deriving or attributing meaning is critical in pragmatics, since they are constantly co-present whenever language is deployed. Together they are responsible for the enriched context-situated understandings with which pragmatics is concerned.[11]

Extract (1) shows all these kinds of semiotic ground in action. For a start, consider the symbolic pairings of form and meaning in the lexical and grammatical items. In Line 3, by using words like *thoo2* 'to telephone (someone)' and *saaw3* '(classificatory) mother's younger sister', C presumes that her listeners have embodied normative representations of what people mean by using these words (i.e. she presumes that her listeners' capacities of assessment include the ability to understand spoken Lao, and she exploits this). Other features of the utterance are iconic-indexical. For instance, while the term *mù∅-khùùn2* 'last night' is indeed symbolically linked to its meaning (i.e. by convention), it is also a deictic expression, indexically relying for proper interpretation on some actual connection to a deictic centre (either that of the speech event, or that of the narrated event; Bühler, 1982/1934; Jakobson, 1971; Hanks, 1989, 1990). In this example, the deictic centre is the speech event. The time of the reported event (Dao telephoning C) is understood to be the evening prior. Similarly, the verb *maa2* 'come, be directed toward a deictic centre' features a symbolic mapping of form to meaning, but as a deictic verb it similarly requires an understood origo for its proper interpretation. Although C does not make it explicit, her interlocutors will understand that the origo indexed by this deictic verb is her own home, in the city. Going out of the realm of symbolic meaning altogether, this reference additionally stands indexically for the fact that she has a telephone at home, signifying her social standing.[12]

One could go on multiplying the ways in which the massively indexical utterance in Line 3 of Extract (1) makes inferences available—what the speaker is wearing, her accent, the fact that she is chewing betel nut, the way it is affecting her articulation of the words, her visible effort not to let any of the contents of her oversized betel package spill from her mouth, and so on. All of them are of potential significance for a pragmatic analysis of the scene.

We now turn to the notion of interpretant, the third component of Peirce's notion of the sign which is absent from Saussure's and from most models of meaning presumed in linguistics, psychology, and other branches of cognitive science. An interpretant is whatever is created by a $sign_{ts}$ insofar as that $sign_{ts}$ stands for a certain $object_{ts}$ (Peirce, 1965/1932; Colapietro, 1989; Parmentier, 1994; Kockelman, 2005). If a $sign_{ts}$ is something taken (by someone) to stand for an $object_{ts}$, an interpretant is whatever a person does that constitutes a taking of that $sign_{ts}$ to stand for that $object_{ts}$. Stopping at an intersection when the traffic light is red is an interpretant of the red light in so far as it constitutes my taking the red light's state of being red as standing for the instruction 'you stop here now'. At the token level, an interpretant may be affective (something you feel), energetic (something you do), representational (something you say) or ultimate (something you think).[13] At the type level, interpretants may be thought of as general dispositions to behave (feel, act, speak, think) in certain ways (cf. Bourdieu's habitus; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Hanks, 2005b).

As observers in interaction, we have direct perceptual access mostly to energetic and representational interpretants.[14] The difference may be explicated with reference to an example from the interaction shown in Fig. 1 and Extract (1). (See Enfield, 2006b for more detailed discussion of this case.) When C has finished preparing a betel nut package to chew, she places the basket of paraphernalia on the floor, and begins to shift her body back. This is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Then, B (visible behind C) moves forward, in order to reach toward the basket, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

B's action of reaching forward in Fig. 3 is a $sign_{ts}$. It may be taken to stand for B's desire and purpose: she wants to get her hands on the basket, in order to be able to prepare a betel nut package and to then chew on it (enacting her rôle as an older Lao woman at social leisure, as C is already doing). Observe C's production of two distinct observable interpretants of B's action. One of these is an energetic interpretant which orients to B's desire to get hold of the basket. It displays C's analysis of B's prior action as standing for her desire to have the basket in hand. Accordingly, C grabs the basket and passes it to B, as illustrated in Fig. 4.

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[11] See Hanks (1990, 1996, 2005a), Silverstein (1976), inter alia, for explication of the indexicality of language use. See Haiman (1985), Langacker (1987) on iconicity in language use. Gricean and neo-Gricean approaches to pragmatic enrichment work on the interplay between symbolic and iconic-indexical meaning.

[12] The issue is not whether C intended to communicate these indexical associations, but that they are available to interpreters who are actively assessing their social environment. As it turns out, soon after this, she explicitly states that she has a telephone in her own house.

[13] Peirce made these distinctions, but used slightly different terms. The terminology here is from Kockelman (2005).

[14] We of course have access to our own affective and ultimate interpretants, i.e. when signer and interpreter are the same person.

Fig. 2. C finishes preparations to chew betel nut (see basket in foreground) and shifts her body back, away from centre of image.
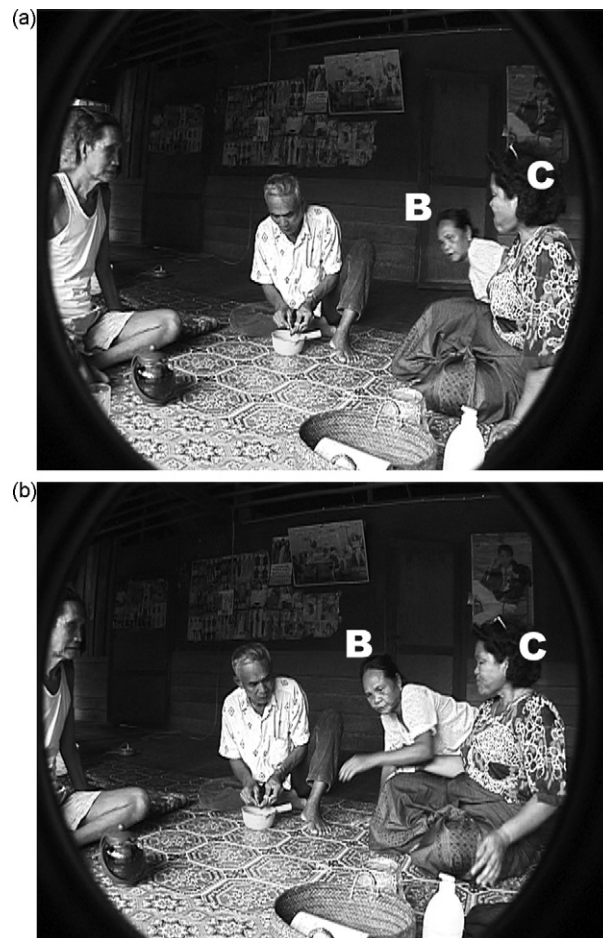

Fig. 3. B moves forward (3a) and towards centre of image (3b) in order to reach toward basket in foreground.
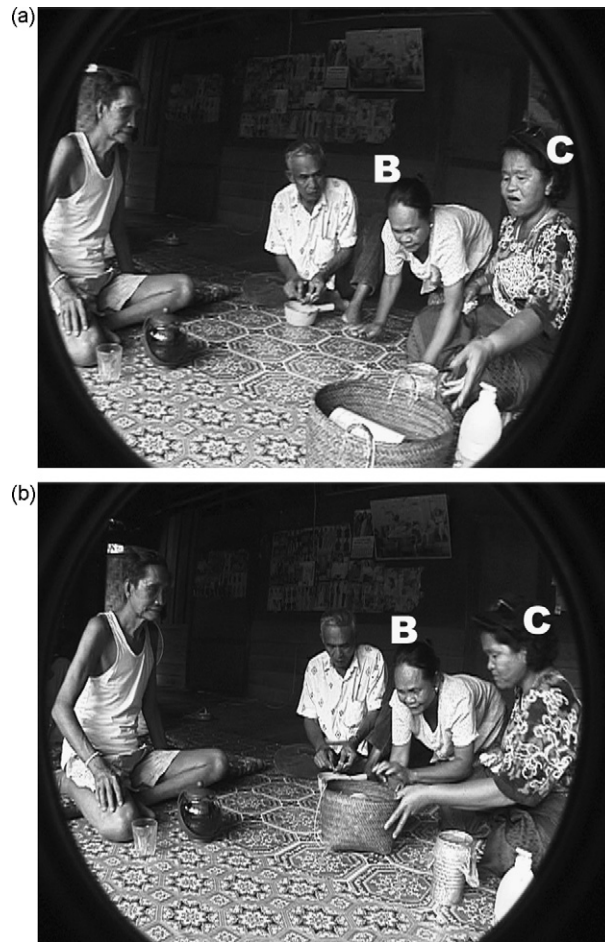
Fig. 4. C grabs basket (4a) and passes it to B (4b).

The second interpretant produced by C (simultaneous to the first) is a representational interpretant, a verbal response. Like the action of passing the basket, it is an interpretant of B's prior reaching action, but it is oriented to a different object$_{ts}$ of that action (qua sign$_{ts}$). Here C's spoken response displays an analysis of B's prior action as standing for her desire to chew betel nut. Accordingly, C says to B:

(2)   C   **caw4 khiaw4 vaa3**
              2SG.P chew   QPLR.INFER
              'You'll chew, will you?'

B confirms this with an immediate response *mm5* 'yeah', and accepts the basket, proceeding to prepare her betel package, as projected.[15]

The importance of recognizing interpretants in meaning is twofold. First, it makes explicit the complementarity between signer and interpreter in meaning. Things mean what people take them to mean, but this is not to say that anything can mean just anything. Social norms do a good job of reining in possible interpretations. But critically, the intending 'sender' of an addressed message will be guided in the way they formulate a communicative action by a set

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[15] Thus, we see the interpretant in (2) playing its subsequent role as a sign$_{ts}$ in a new frame, in turn calling forth a new interpretant. In this way, an account of basic pair-part structure (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) falls out naturally from the neo-Peircean three-part sign (i.e. as a chain of sign$_{ts}$-interpretant relations).

of assumptions as to how people will conventionally respond *to* the sign$_{ts}$ resources they have access to. In turn, when a sign$_{ts}$ is responded to in the way anticipated, this is a sign$_{ts}$ confirming the appropriateness of the first sign$_{ts}$'s formulation.

A second outcome of recognizing the interpretant as a defining component of signification is to introduce a dynamic perspective into meaning. The Saussurean two-pole sign is a static model of representation (relations between signs$_{ts}$ and objects$_{ts}$), but meaning is equally a matter of interpretation or inferential articulation (relations between signs$_{ts}$ and interpretants).[16] Because interpretants are perceptible responses, they are signs$_{ts}$ in themselves, which may give rise in turn to new interpretants, and so on in a chain. This process is as basic to meaning as the form-meaning mapping typically taken to be the all-defining semiotic relation (Saussure, 1916). Take an example of how this chain of meaning can operate:

(3)   1   A: *Hand me my notebook.*
      2   B: ((hands A her pad of writing paper))
      3   A: *No, I mean my laptop computer.*

In (3), Line 1 is a complex sign$_{ts}$ which may be interpreted in more than one way, since the sign$_{ts}$ *notebook* has more than one conventional object$_{ts}$, including 'pad of writing paper' and 'laptop computer'. Line 2 is an (energetic) interpretant of Line 1, according to the above definition, since it is created by Line 1 insofar as Line 1 stands for something (i.e. in so far as Line 1 has a meaning). This interpretant – an action of handing over a pad of writing paper – is itself a new sign$_{ts}$ which publicly displays B's interpretation of the sign$_{ts}$ in Line 1, and thereby reveals which of the possible objects$_{ts}$ B took the sign$_{ts}$ in Line 1 to stand for. Since speaker A was evidently not intending the word *notebook* to refer to a pad of writing paper, but to a laptop computer, she repairs this problem of understanding in Line 3. And in the same way we just saw in Line 2, Line 3 is both an interpretant of Line 2 (linked to what came before it), and a sign$_{ts}$ in itself (linking to what is coming next).

Along these lines, social interactions are chained trajectories of signs and responses, where each response becomes in turn a sign, seeking further response (Mead, 1934; Sacks et al., 1974, among many others). The purposeful social use of signs$_{ts}$ involves the strategic deployment of those signs$_{ts}$ guided by anticipation of other's (likely or possible) responses.

5.1. Norms and heuristics

Before proceeding further, it is worth clarifying what is meant by 'norms' in the above discussion, and contrasting it with 'heuristics', which operate upon norms in processes of pragmatic interpretation.

Norms are learned patterns of behavior which are consistent in a community not because it is explicitly stated anywhere that they be followed like rules, but because NOT behaving in a manner consistent with those patterns will be taken as marked, and will then attract special attention in the form of surprise or sanction (Wittgenstein, 1953; Garfinkel, 1967; Brandom, 1979; Kockelman, 2006a). Social agency is built on this kind of norm-regulated semiotic commitment, defined as 'the degree to which one anticipates an interpretant, where this anticipation is evinced in being surprised by, and/or disposed to sanction, non-anticipated interpretants' (Kockelman, 2007). Many patterns of language structure and usage are like this, including most of semantics and grammar.

By contrast with locally conventional norms, heuristics are logical principles of interpretation which may be generically applied in attributing meaning to tokens of communicative behavior (using specific semiotic resources in specific contexts). This is the basic insight behind Grice's work on meaning (1957) and conversational inference (1975) (cf. also Goffman's notion of framing; 1974, 1981). Grice's insight can be extracted quite apart from any ethnocentrism of his widely maligned conversational maxims. The essential point is as Levinson (2000) puts it, that amplicative enrichment (Grice's implicature) is a smart solution to a thorny bottleneck problem in human communication: we speak slow yet we think fast. While Grice's (or Sperber and Wilson's, or Levinson's) claims about particular examples may be argued with case by case (Wierzbicka, 1991), the principle is robust: in all cultures, people say more than is said (or convey more than is coded). That is, interpreters of their communicative actions are able to extract more than is simply encoded in the conventions of the semiotic resources deployed (e.g. the dictionary

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[16] On inferential articulation, see Brandom (1994, 2000), Kockelman (2005).

meanings of their words and grammatical constructions). What differs culturally are the local premises (norms) which feed the process of inference, not the inferential processes themselves (cf. Enfield, 2002; Evans, 2003).

6. Pragmatics as social problem-solving

Presuming the cognitive and semiotic wherewithal described in previous sections, we can now characterize pragmatics more concretely as communicative action for management of the social world. Pragmatics may be defined as social problem-solving.

A problem demands a solution.[17] For example, if I don't eat every day I get hungry. I need shelter from the weather. To ensure that my hunger is satisfied daily I might engage in a complex cycle of agricultural practice aimed at harvesting enough rice to meet my yearly needs, along with hunting and gathering activities to supplement my staple. To satisfy my need for shelter I might build a house.[18]

Many imperatives are imposed by genetic and terrestrial fate, and are thus faced in all cultures. But other imperatives are caused by culture-specific facts. Notice how problems and solutions are nested. Once I have committed to a certain solution, this raises new imperatives (cf. Dunbar, 1988:26–28). For example, as a professional in a western European socio-economic world, having committed to certain solutions for the problems of food and shelter, I cannot get along without money. So, getting money is a solution which in itself becomes an imperative, a problem-in-need-of-solution. Solutions or strategies will differ widely from human group to human group. For instance, precisely how a person cultivates, hunts, or gathers food will vary greatly across the world's cultures.[19]

Resources for problem-solving include natural materials (e.g. products of the forest around my village) and culturally acquired tools, instruments, and social conventions. In navigating the social world, our most important resources are semiotic ones—especially, the acquired tools which comprise the expressive resources of any language, along with our social associates and their normative habits of interpretation. We presume that our social associates will have complex powers of assessment (outlined in section 4, above), and our deployment of expressive resources exploits these powers of assessment as a way of socially managing others in order to bring about the results we desire. For example, I might combine words into utterances, and combine these utterances with the transfer of pieces of paper or coin in order to stave my hunger for the evening. Or I might take my machete to the forest and return with lengths of wood, bamboo, rattan, and palm leaf to repair my broken house (usually with the help of neighbors). In both cases, I would typically count my social associates – *other people* – among my problem-solving resources.

If I have used examples from outside the usual purview of linguistic pragmatics, it is because I want to stress the generality of application of these analytic concepts to human social behavior. This generality may give some promise for the comparative analysis of communicative pragmatics across cultures. It is a matter of figuring out for any given situation the problems being faced and the solutions being chosen (among which we must consider the resources being mobilized).

6.1. Two likely universal imperatives for pragmatics

At least two imperatives can be argued to apply at all times in social interaction, and are likely to be universal. These are an informational imperative and an affiliational imperative (Enfield, 2006b).[20] The problem that the informational imperative unceasingly presents us with is to ensure that our attempts at converging with others on symbolic reference are tolerably successful (Clark, 1996). That is, we need to ensure that we are being understood by others to a degree

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[17] I will sometimes distinguish between imperatives as problems which demand solutions, and strategies as the particular solutions chosen (Dunbar, 1988).

[18] See Schutz (1970) and predecessors for a distinction between the 'because motives' which focus on the states of affairs which give rise to actions (I'm picking berries because I'm hungry) and the 'in-order-to motives' which focus on the goals of actions, or the states of affairs which actions will give rise to (I'm picking berries in order to eat them).

[19] Among the set of problems-in-need-of-solution, some will be generically present across cultures (e.g. the need to deal with significant problems of speaking, hearing, and understanding in conversation; Schegloff, 2006). Others will be present by virtue of culturally distinct factors (e.g. language-particular thinking-for-speaking effects, locally specified requirements of politeness, etc.). That is, some features of code and pragmatics are solutions to problems, some are problems in need of solution. Culture is always a system for solving problems of social life. It's just that some of our problems are caused by the solutions we (habitually) choose, and by the nature of our problem-solving resources—i.e. by culture itself.

[20] These are akin to Goffman's 'system' versus 'ritual' constraints in face-to-face interaction (Goffman, 1981). Paul Kockelman (personal communication) points out that these may be taken to correspond to Jakobson's 'referential' and 'phatic' functions of language, two among his six general functions (the other four being emotive, poetic, conative, and metalingual; Jakobson, 1960).

sufficient for current communicative purposes. At the same time, the problem that the affiliational imperative unceasingly presents us with is that we must ensure we are appropriately managing the social consequences of any interaction we happen to be in (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Heritage and Raymond, 2005). Every interaction increments an interpersonal relationship by means of building common experience, and displays the nature of that relationship such that it may be evaluated by participants and onlookers. A relationship thinking approach puts this in the foreground.

We might also refer to the affiliational imperative as micro-political or coalitional, in so far as it has to do with establishing the right relationships, putting the other person in or out of some social circle. We are not just generically subject to an unceasing relationship-consequentiality of social behavior (and hence obliged to attend to ritual requirements of face; Goffman, 1959, 1967), we are also compelled to maintain relationships of certain proximity types (Hill and Dunbar, 2003). The resultant social structure is an outcome of specific cognitive constraints and a trade-off of numbers of relationships one maintains against time it takes to service them (Dunbar, 1996). Reality is more textured than this thanks to the complexities of sociometry (Rogers, 1995; Enfield, 2003, 2005), by which different people solve the trade-off in different ways (distinguishing between, say, 'weak ties connectors' and 'strong ties homebodies'; Granovetter, 1973, 1978). And not everyone is equally adept in matters of affiliation and coalition.

To consider how the attempt to balance informational and affiliational imperatives can surface in interaction, let us return to Line 3 of Extract (1), repeated here for convenience:

3   C   **mùø-khùùn2 phen1 kaø   thoo2 maa2, saaw3 daaw3 hanø**
          last night   3SG.P T.LNK phone come, MYZ   D   TPC.DIST
          'So last night she called, that Aunty Dao.'

Along lines laid out earlier in this section, we may regard the speaker in Line 3 as being engaged in a problem-solving exercise at multiple levels. Let us focus on her management of the problem of referential convergence, that is, the informational requirement that speaker and listener have the same understanding of who is being spoken about (cf. Enfield and Stivers, 2007). As I argue in more detail in Enfield (2006b), if informational convergence were all that mattered, we might predict that speakers would err on the side of making their referential expressions overly explicit. Imagine I want to make reference to our close mutual friend John Smith. I could just refer to him as *John*, but since we are mutually acquainted with another person also named John – John Brown – I am risking confusion. Shouldn't I just use the full first-name-plus-surname format *John Smith* in order to ensure that this confusion doesn't arise? Well, if I were to do this, I take a different kind of risk. I would risk conveying that I presumed you as addressee would not have been able to tell by my use of *John* which John I was talking about. This would put social distance between us, by implying that I needed to be more explicit than was actually necessary given the amount of common ground we share. On the other hand, the more elliptical I can be while still successfully achieving reference, the better I can indicate the high degree of common ground we share (Garde, 2003; Enfield, 2006a,b).

In Line 3 of Extract (1), our speaker C faces this very challenge. She is going to make reference to Dao, and it is the first explicit mention during this entire social encounter. This first mention will function to thematize her (i.e. bring her into the focus of joint attention) in order that predications and other characterizations may be made about her in a structured sequence of discourse to follow. Normally, a first mention of this kind would warrant the use of a full nominal expression (Chafe, 1980; Fox, 1987, 1996; Lambrecht, 1994; Enfield and Stivers, 2007; see Enfield, 2007b for details on how this is done in Lao, see also Enfield, 2007a, Chapter 8). However, this particular referent is hardly inactive (in the sense of being inaccessible to the consciousness of participants; Chafe, 1994; Lambrecht, 1994). For one thing, Dao is the key link in terms of affinal relations among interlocutors. Second, the very reason for the visit (as known from its prior arrangement) is to attend to business on Dao's behalf.

This is the situation C finds herself in, and Line 3 shows us how she wields semiotic instruments in crafting a solution, exploiting her interlocutors' presumed powers of assessment. C's solution to the referential problem is to package two distinct referential expressions into a single turn at talk. The specific distribution of these two referential expressions in the clause may be argued to be a best solution to the difficult trade-off of having to be explicit enough to meet the informational imperative while being inexplicit enough to meet the affiliation imperative (where greater explicitness means greater accountability; Kockelman, 2007).

Notice first that the utterance in Line 3 is prosodically structured so as to mark off a main clause from an afterthought-like piece in a post-posed clausal right position (Enfield, 2007a:4). This is marked by a comma. What comes before the comma is a complete clause which in itself could be a finished utterance. What comes after the

comma is audibly lower in pitch and volume, and is thus marked as a kind of add-on to the main clause (Enfield, 2007a:4). Consider first the properties of the main, pre-comma part of the utterance, translated as 'So last night she called'. This is the first mention of the referent in this entire encounter, yet the referential expression is a pronoun, a form which presumes that the referent is already established in the discourse world and accessible (Chafe, 1980; Fox, 1987). This in itself is structurally unusual, since it would typically be insufficient for meeting the informational imperative (i.e. there's a high danger that people won't understand who is being referred to). But as noted above, in this particular context the referent is already implicitly activated to some extent. Note also that it is not just any pronoun but one among a paradigm of socially-marked pronouns, thus carrying semantic information which will help in narrowing down reference (see Enfield, 2007a, Chapter 5, and section 6 below). However, the speaker does not just rely on this pronoun to achieve reference. Her post-comma add-on is a full nominal (kin-title-plus-personal-name) which refers to the same person as the pronoun in the main clause. The speaker is supplying a back-up, post-posed explication of the pronominal reference in the main clause, but does so in a way that displays attention to the affiliational motivation to be less rather than more referentially explicit.

Because the full nominal reference to Dao in Line 3 comes immediately after a point of syntactic completion (marked by the comma), it is vulnerable to being in overlap with someone else's speech (since each point of syntactic completion is a point at which others in the conversation may self-select and begin talking; Sacks et al., 1974). The fact that the 'right-positioned' material is delivered with reduced pitch and volume contributes further to its vulnerability. If another speaker were to have begun talking at the comma, the add-on would be more likely to have been lost in the overlap.

For these reasons, we can argue that C's formal packaging of reference to Dao in Line 3 – both its syntactic packaging as distributed across main clause and post-clausal slot, and its prosodic patterning, as differently expressed before and after a point of syntactic completion – show highly sensitive management of semiotic resources in going for a best balance in simultaneously meeting informational and affiliational imperatives in reference. Her packaging of the referent as a pronoun in the main clause structure implies that her interlocutors are able to achieve reference with minimal code, while she nevertheless supplies the unequivocal referential material (the name), but does so in a vulnerable format, indexing the likelihood that her interlocutors didn't really need that extra information.

7. Relationship topography arising from pragmatic practice

Relationships (of both the externally grounded and reciprocally grounded type) form a basis for mapping a social-relational topography. As argued in section 2, above, our point of first consideration should not be the larger structure of a social system, but the set of (types of) dyadic relationships out of which the larger structure may be built, and the practices which constitute proper displays of the polar social statuses defined by those relationships (Linton, 1936; Hinde, 1976; Pomerantz and Mandelbaum, 2005).

Consider the use of pronominal expressions in Lines 3 and 6 of Extract (1). In using a pronoun for third person singular reference, both speakers have to choose from among four levels (bare, familiar, polite, formal; see Enfield, 2007a, Chapter 5). In this case they each use the polite 3rd person singular pronoun *phen1* in referring to Dao. But this use of the polite form is a marked usage in both cases. In most situations, given their social relation to the referent, these speakers would normally use the bare or unmarked, downward-oriented 3rd person singular pronoun *man2*. But here their referential formulation is pragmatically marked for reasons relating to the business-like nature of the encounter, and the need to express respect toward Dao. She is, after all, a benevolent maker of merit whose generosity is being drawn from on both sides. Nobody on this occasion wants to risk being taken to be critical or dismissive.

This symmetry of construal marked by different speakers' use of the same pronominal level for a given reference is not what we always find. In other situations, speakers may use different pronouns for a single referent, signaling an asymmetry of perspectives. See Enfield (2007b) for an example in which two speakers refer to a third, non-present individual, one using an upward-looking pronoun, one downward-looking. Because of their relative ages, one of these speakers formulates reference more politely, since he is younger and thus 'below' the referent, while the other marks himself as 'higher' than the referent. The contrasting referential perspectives persist across multiple references. Thus, we see two speakers expressing their respective social relations to a third, and secondarily expressing their social relations to each other.

Choices of pronoun use are ways of displaying (dis)affiliation through the logic of externally-grounded relationships (see section 2, above). Anything which may be evaluated (morally or otherwise), particularly another

person, can be a third entity with respect to which you and I can define our relationship. Practices of coalition-formation across a range of social species manipulate this kind of triadic relation. Capuchin monkeys, for example, like many socially complex species, engage in a range of practices which manipulate social relations of coalition. In the animal world, coalition is technically defined as 'aggressive cooperation between group-mates against conspecifics' (Perry, 2003:113). I am focusing here on the cooperation involved in publicly directing action toward a common social goal. And note that capuchin monkeys engage more often in 'pseudo-coalitions', where group-mates get together in displaying aggression toward some harmless creature or object like an egg or a patch of dirt (Perry, 2003:113).[21] This illustrates how the bonding nature of coalitionary behavior can be a goal in itself, independent of any (immediate) utilitarian outcome of such bonding. A good deal of human pragmatic behavior is along these lines (Malinowski, 1926).

In another example from the social behavior of other species with relationship-grounded societies, many male bottlenose dolphins form life-long partnerships with other male dolphins, mostly for the purpose of cooperating in guarding individual females during periods of receptivity (Tyack, 2003:343). Coalition-mates swim in formation to shield females from the attentions of other males. While any dolphins of the same social group may swim or feed together, what is special about coalition-mates is the highly synchronous WAY they swim or feed together (Wells, 2003:49). Again, we see the same in human communicative pragmatics, when people are able to make honest displays that they share common ground, such as when one person finishes another's sentence (Lerner, 1996), when two people finish a sentence in unison (Lerner, 1992), or when one person makes an oblique reference which only one other person can demonstrate that they have understood (Pomerantz and Mandelbaum, 2005; see Enfield, 2006b for discussion of a case from the Lao interaction described above).

8. Conclusion

From a relationship thinking perspective, the individuals in Extract (1) are not merely talking but are involved in situated micro-politics, teamwork, negotiation: practices not just of signifying but of strategic signifying-for-interpreting. These activities pivot on multiple axes, including natural principles of meaning, norms of representation and of public practice, social statuses and the roles that display and define them, inferential relations of signs$_{ts}$ to responsive interpretants, the discourse-conversational trajectories generated by these relations, and so on. The participants are doing what they can to manage and assess their social environment, and each individual is managed and assessed in turn. The defining forces in this environment are their social companions. Unlike physical objects, these others have intentional states and social statuses. Managing them is sensitive and potentially consequential.

Moreover, relationship thinking defines individuals in terms of their relationships, not the other way around. The very notion of a social person (and self) is defined in terms of one's position in a patterned system of (interrelated) relationships (Mead, 1934; Linton, 1936). Because the participants in Extract (1) live in a relationship-grounded social world, their encounter is not only a consequence of social facts, but it will have new social consequences in turn.

Acknowledgements

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[21] This appears to be directly analogous to people gossiping about celebrities like Tom Cruise or Michael Jackson. Like the capuchins' harmless objects, famous people are commonly recognizable and allow us to affiliate at low (immediate) social cost. (Cf. Barkow, 1992.) Unlike the capuchin case, of course, celebrity gossip gives humans a chance to take *moral* stances together.

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