DIALOGUE: WHERE LANGUAGE MEETS ACTIVITY.
AN ESSAY REVIEW OF *LANGUAGE AS DIALOGUE - FROM RULES TO PRINCIPLES OF PROBABILITY* BY EDDA WEIGAND (2009).

Marie-Cécile Bertau
Universität München, Germany

The Urge for a New Perspective

Language as Dialogue is a book with a strong voice. It is Edda Weigand's voice, arguing for a decisively different understanding of language. The difference of this understanding lies in that it takes seriously the perspective of language as activity, that viewpoint which came into sight with the pragmatic turn in linguistics in the 1970s. Taking this perspective seriously means to go beyond the limits of the sentence into the conversational exchange itself, and beyond the pure addition of another speaker. Taking another speaker into consideration cannot be the point of the so called dialogic turn for Weigand, a turn associated with the field of dialogue analysis, conversation analysis, or discourse analysis. The point cannot be only to investigate dialogic material while retaining the old structural ideas about language and its use. Against this, Weigand's proposal puts forward a functional view, permitting the language phenomenon actually to be embedded in human activities, to be a genuine activity: with purposes, relating the actors and their activities, making them meaningful for the specific world they share.

As this book reflects, Weigand's work of the last decades has been the quest for this step into dialogue, for the shift from structure to function.[1] It leads her to move beyond the dichotomy of competence and performance, so deeply rooted within linguistics since Chomsky. This dichotomy was continued within the pragmatic framework in linguistics: the competence with its ideal, well-formed structure or pattern is still supposed to underlie the more or less chaotic performance; it is then the pragmaticists' task to uncover the rules, to reach for the well-formed patterns in order to explain what actually happens. Weigand denies the existence of such a competence, and, consequently, acknowledges the "chaotic" of the performance – this is nothing but the complexity of actual language activity, made out of chaos and order, and reaching beyond rules and patterns. Human communicative competence, as Weigand calls it, is thus "not a closed mathematical or logical system. It is an open system with various

AUTHORS' NOTE. Please address correspondence about this article to Marie-Cécile Bertau, Institut für Phonetik, Universität München, Schellingstraße 3, D-80799 München. Email: Bertau@lmu.de

---

[1] For German readers note that *Language as Dialogue* (2009) is *not* a translation of Weigand's book *Sprache als Dialog* (2003).

parameters interacting in such a way that they do not always exactly fit together" (p. 169).[2] Thus, the system of human communicative competence is open-ended, and it is precisely in accepting such open points that it is able to "offer the possibility of coping with the infinity and diversity of the communicative worlds of the interlocutors" (p. 169).

Leaving behind the structural paradigm for a functional one as well as re-conceiving the duality of competence and performance, corresponds to a new stance in linguistics, a stance with far reaching consequences. Language rules are not the primary concept, but the wholeness of the language action as performed is; hence, *interlocutors* themselves rather than abstract rules give sense and meaning to language performances. This leads Weigand to advocate for a "humanized linguistics," a "human linguistics". Language becomes here "a kind of human behaviour, not an object of philology or natural science", and therefore, "linguistics consequently has to be defined as a human science which describes and explains what human beings are doing when they try to negotiate their positions in social communities" (p. 281). Weigand aims at a true change for her discipline: "Linguistics has to be redefined as a human science which takes account of the specific conditions of human behaviour" (p. 293).

Language as Dialogue is clearly an important and necessary book for all scholars who are interested in going beyond the monologism still prevailing in language sciences, regardless of the quantity of dialogues actually investigated. This volume belongs to similar attempts in constructing a fundamental dialogic conception for the investigation of language as to be found for instance in Markovà and Foppa (1990), Linell (1998, 2009), as well as O'Connell and Kowal (2003) and O'Connell, et al. (1990). However, it is noticeable that Weigand does not refer to any one of these scholars. She has developed her stance within the field of research starting from classical speech act theory, and developing into dialogue analysis, conversation or discourse analysis belonging to a specific linguistic community. Precisely this focus on a field devoted explicitly to dialogue makes it clear that it is indeed not sufficient to investigate dialogues per se in order to be "dialogic".

The book is therefore important and necessary from a linguistic perspective. But beyond this specific disciplinary interest, it belongs to a wider actual effort in human sciences aiming at constructing a dialogical conception of human activities, be they verbal or non-verbal or concerned with the self, consciousness, thinking, or speaking and listening (Bertau, 2008; Lipari, 2010; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Riemslagh, 2011; Bertau, Gonçalves & Raggatt, 2011). Weigand herself addresses the necessity to go beyond particular disciplinary interests and stresses the challenge "to go beyond a separate area of dialogue by embedding dialogue analysis within the analysis of human action in general" (p. 338). Dialogic approaches to human activities cannot

---

[2] All page citations refer to Weigand (2009) unless otherwise noted.

ignore the means of language, a means so pervasive within human activity. Thus, scholars in the human sciences have to be concerned about an adequate *dialogic* theory of language. Hence, Weigand's work is another contribution to dialogism – in this case from a linguistic perspective.

Saying that Weigand's voice is a strong one is not just a nice metaphor or just a twinkle to those dialogicists who address the concept of voice. Indeed, it is a salient characteristic of this book that its author speaks clearly, urging its readers to look at possible positions, to make decisions, and to recognize the consequences in so doing. To this gesture belongs her explicit critique of scholars within the dialogical approach (e.g., pp. 74-75, 80-86), and suggestions about "the right way" to investigate language use. The aim of this gesture is that basic shift in perspective mentioned above: a fundamental reversion which takes the complex, or the whole rather than some abstracted essentials as the starting point for analysis:

> "Language used by human beings can neither be represented as abstract competence nor as totally irregular performance. Linguists who try to find the way from abstract competence to performance are the victims of a methodological fallacy: there is no bridge from artificial constructs to performance. Human beings orient themselves in performance according to a complex ability which I called *competence-in-performance* […] The scientific challenge then results from the fundamental methodological issue of how to address the complex. If we try to tackle the complex – which is more than the addition of pieces – *we must start from the right point, i.e. from the whole.*" (Weigand, 2009, p. 202)

Thus, *Language as Dialogue* reads like a kind of manifesto. This is not a disadvantage, rather, its clear positioning and addressivity is an opportunity for the reader to seriously think about the issue of language in use, beyond a seemingly neutral description of seemingly obvious facts about it, transporting an unsaid and taken-for-granted ideology about language. Because the book is so clearly positioned and positioning, it is interesting to look briefly at what I want to call its vocal structure.

The silent framing voice is Weigand's own one, as the series editor of *Dialogue Studies (DS)* at John Benjamins, Publisher. The first perceivable voice in the book is Sebastian Feller's, its editor, writing the introduction to the whole book as well as short introductory pieces to each of the volume's three major parts and a brief conclusion. Each part contains six to seven articles from different years (ranging from 1990 to 2007), grouped under the heading of the parts that address "communicative competence" from different perspectives. Hence, the volume amounts to a collection of articles, leading the readers through Weigand's thinking of language as dialogue through roughly two decades. Feller is one of Weigand's former graduate assistants who "always attended her lectures" (p. 2). His short introductions to each part are meant as summaries and comments on the articles presented. In the general introduction the

reader finds a clear institutional-personal positioning of Weigand, introducing her as a great person and scholar whose voice Feller has heard for years. It is a listening voyage, the witnessed development of her work and ideas that is now offered to the reader in order to share it. I think that this procedure has the function of clearly positioning Weigand's work from another's perspective. This allows the double-voicedness of both speaking oneself and being commented upon, thus reinforcing the position to be defended and affirmed. This procedure shows how difficult it is for the scientific position advanced in this book to be accepted by the linguistic community. By its vocal structure, also supported by the extra references of Weigand's publications, the book amounts to a homage to her whole scholarly career.

That Weigand's voice is so present is also due to the origins of the articles: they are often oral pieces, such as plenary speeches and lectures, some of them subsequently edited in journals or books. This gives the book a specific form which, in turn, gives way to specific reading possibilities. It is a form located nearby the spoken word, suitable to the book's content as contribution to a fundamental discussion within linguistics, and open to further discussions. Further, the developmental pathway of Weigand's thinking becomes quite clear, although the arrangement of the articles – ranging from 1990 to 2008 – is not strictly chronological. It becomes clear precisely because the reader will find herself/himself examining the same topic in different articles, but rephrased, put in a different way and in relation to a different context of ideas. There are, due to the form chosen for the volume, unavoidable repetitions. Nevertheless, the form allows the reader to understand what Weigand aims at and means in cycles of "redundancy" – reading again the same ideas differently, thus experiencing a useful redundancy so that understanding builds up like a mosaic. In this way, the book invites a heuristic, a search-and-find reading, starting with topics or with words found in the index, or going through a whole part.[3] This could be a difficulty for students, but this can also turn into an advantage, just because, as mentioned, Weigand does not take a seemingly natural position to language but defends a specific one. It also makes clear to beginners that thinking is a long and sometimes tedious journey, a development and not a dogma, not an inevitable result. Hence, the articles are rightly labeled as essays.

A Dialogical Theory

Taking up the challenge opened up by the pragmatic and then the dialogic turn, Weigand does not stay satisfied with some dialogic material to investigate, but with insistence asks for the object of conversation: "what sort of object is the dialogic one?" (p. 72), she asks for a theoretical framework as adequate instrument to dialogical

---

[3] Although the whole book is well organized and presented, there is one important tool missing: a name index. This would have been a good instrument especially in regard to Weigand's critique of other scholars.

investigations, and thus for some basic criteria and principles grounding "serious analysis" and constituting the specific dialogic approach. This questioning is grounded in the basic gesture of "going beyond" mere structural and formal addition, and into wholeness, with the idea of addressing the complexity of language use, of preserving its complexity. This means a refusal to fragment language use into pieces which can only result in a monologic view of language which addresses the perspective of the speaker alone and isolates his/her *sentence* from its conversational context Thus, a fragmentation of language use into pieces (single sentences) cannot address a *directed utterance,* that is, utterances directed to *someone*. An interdependence between individual speech acts becomes for Weigand the necessary assumption and the point to start with (p. 33).

The "genuine dialogic criterion" is – against the structural-isolating view – "an internal functional one" that assigns an utterance in a certain formal position a specific function (p. 74). Purposefulness of human activities is the leading notion here, specifically, the general communicative purpose of interlocutors coming to an understanding (p. 268).[4] This gives way to the functionality of individual linguistic acts. Purposefulness is also what leads communication *beyond* patterns and rules into the above mentioned open-endedness: following an emergent view, Weigand agrees with Clark (1996) that "conversations are purposive but unplanned" (p. 269), so "the dialogic sequence is not calculable in advance but *emerges*" (p. 274).

Thus, "the purposes of linguistic action are always dialogic-oriented purposes" (p. 30), and the resulting dialogic interaction is based on acting and reacting. Acting corresponds to making a claim, and reacting corresponds to fulfilling that claim. The first speaker's act, and the second speaker's reaction constitute the founding sequence, what Weigand calls the "dialogic action game" as a two-step performance which gives the utterances a functional meaning. This functional meaning of the utterance is to be either initiative or reactive. Thus, utterances show themselves to be interrelated, and this *interrelatedness* of the utterances is constitutive for their dialogicality. Weigand distinguishes four types of minimal action games: REPRESENTATIVE, DIRECTIVE, EXPLORATIVE and DECLARATIVE, a taxonomy of speech acts on a first fundamental level (p. 57). Dialogue is thus a functional concept, not abstractable from purposeful human activity (p. 64), and the action game is a cultural unit, determined by its interactive purpose; it is a notion akin to Wittgenstein's language game, although slightly different (p. 271).[5]

---

[4] See also the ten premises pp. 271-272.
[5] "I use the term *action game* in this open, variable sense in which Wittgenstein also has introduced his term 'language games'. However, I do not agree with him in assuming infinite games, only infinite ways of playing the game." (Weigand 2009, p. 270-271).

It is interesting to note here that a functional and dialogic approach to language, arriving at precisely the same idea of the internal interdependence of the utterances, was formulated earlier by Russian-Soviet linguists in the 1920s, with the most important contribution being Jakubinskij's *On Verbal Dialogue* (1923/1979).[6] Not least among this text's influences was the work of the Bakhtin-Medvedev-Vološinov Circle, thus contributing to what subsequently has been called "dialogism" (Holquist, 1990), a crucial influence on contemporary dialogical approaches generally. However, linguistics after World War II was completely undialogical, and it took decades to arrive at least at the idea formulated in the pragmatic turn, namely that language is an act, interwoven with non-verbal acts within specific situations.[7] The resulting speech act theory in its orthodox formulation remarkably did *not* attain dialogicality – a point thoughtfully analysed by Weigand rightly speaking of "Searle's monologic speech act theory" (p. 76).

Purposefulness and interrelatedness of utterances are the main themes in Weigand's proposal for a "genuine Dialogue Theory" (DT), based on two main *principles* (described below). It is important to note here that the term "principle" is understood as a technique with which speakers and listeners orient themselves in a complex, ever-changing and open surrounding (p. 273). Hence, with the notion of principle Weigand's model is capable of reaching further than any well-defined bases standing in opposition to the dynamics of natural systems:

> Dialogue on the basis of principles goes beyond the view of codes, definitions and single patterns. On the contrary, it allows indeterminacy of meaning and different understandings of the interlocutors and is based on negotiations of meaning and understanding in a game best characterized as a 'mixed game'. (Weigand, 2009, p. 238)

The first of the two main principles is the Action Principle which assumes that human beings proceed along a line of purposive behaviour. It is worthwhile to note here that "purpose" is distinguished from "aim", the first is social and pertains to the dialogue as collective interactive purpose, while the second is individual, and corresponds to the intentional goals of the interlocutors, as related to their single actions. Weigand privileges the level of purpose, because the perspective of the individual goal "means leaving the level of the pattern considered as a whole" (p. 90). This opposition of social versus individual is a strong thread running through the book, and grounds her attitude to the psychological aspects of language use as I will address later on.

---

[6] See also Yakubinsky (1997) for another (partial) English translation of this seminal text. See Aumüller (2006) for an analysis of the feature of interdependency of utterances in Jakubinskij and Bakhtin.

[7] The pragmatic turn in the 1970s was instigated by philosophers of language such as Austin and Searle, see e.g., Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) as founding texts.

The second principle is the Dialogic Principle which sets an internal mutual dependency of the individual acts: the "minimal autonomous unit of communication […] is […] the minimal action game consisting of the two-part sequence of initiative and reactive speech or of action and reaction in general" (p. 75). It is precisely by the second principle that the "new object DIALOGUE" is given, characterized by the interdependence of the individual acts. Weigand insists on the twofold-ness of the sequence, assuming (and illustrating it with a few examples) that any three-part sequence, as for instance "Initiation – Reply – Evaluation," is to be understood as a two-part sequence where the second move is seen as an initiative for the next two-part sequence: the Reply is reactive to the Initiation and, subordinately, is itself an initiative for the third move, the Evaluation. From there, Weigand establishes a dialogic speech act taxonomy defining all speech acts as initiative or reactive acts and, thus, establishes their place in terms of mutual interdependence.[8] For Weigand, the genuine dialogical feature of individual acts lies in this mutual dependency. Position is function: an initiative action is a pragmatic claim, and a reactive action fulfils that claim (p.75).

As different essays reveal, the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle belong to a whole architecture of principles.[9] This architecture answers the question of how human beings behave in the complex dialogic world of the action game and highlights the "Principles of Probability" as "guidelines of behaviour, as guidelines of our *competence in performance*" (p. 292). The task of orientation consists in navigating through the complex dialogical world while balancing between definiteness and incalculability– the different principles make precisely this double movement between certainty and uncertainty possible.

The Principles of Probability are themselves based on three fundamental types of principles with a series of corollary principles. The three fundamental types are the *Constitutive*, the *Regulative*, and the *Executive Principles* (p. 249, 292). These three types function as "explanatory devices" to tackle "all the issues which arise in describing human interactive behaviour" (p. 252). The corollaries are related to each type. Hence, the *Constitutive Principles* involve three corollaries: the Action Principle, the Dialogic Principal and the Coherence Principle; the *Regulative Principles* involve two corollaries: the Principles of Emotions and the Rhetorical Principle. The Principles of Politeness, as a kind of sub-corollary, belong to the Rhetorical Principle (p. 293); the *Executive Principle* does not, as far as I see, involve other principles.

Further, the three fundamental Principles, plus their corollaries, make use "of other techniques as reference points for orientation such as the Maxim of Rationality or

---

[8] See Weigand, 2009, p. 79: REPRESENTATIVE – ACCEPTANCE; DIRECTIVE – CONSENTING; EXPLORATIVE – RESPONSE; DECLARATIVE – CONFIRMING.

[9] It is not easy to get a complete overview on this architecture; its building bocks have to be constructed from different essays. Feller's introductions to the three parts could have been a place for such an overview.

Clarity, the Principles of Convention, of Suggestion etc." (p. 293). The Principle of Suggestion acknowledges the fact that human beings are "always subject to irrational tendencies" and "often rely on suggestions and presumptions" (p. 169); as such, this principle contradicts explicitly the Principle of Rationality and Convention – thus, human dialogues go beyond rationality and conventional forms *because* they are human (p. 169). Nevertheless, some principles orient within a given order: the Sequencing Principle enlarges the unit of the minimal action game (p. 168), the Rule Principle and the Routine Principle are sub-principles to the Principle of Convention. That the complex and incalculable dynamics counterbalances these principles is expressed by the Principle of Different Worlds that acknowledges the difference between the partners' view, so that the Open System Principle is needed (pp. 168-169).

Weigand's Dialogic Theory starts thus with the definition of a "genuine new object, Language as Dialogue", continues by formulating a set of basic assumptions about the object and then explains the "object-in-function" by principles of probability. Ten methodological principles for the theory are given, based on the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle, and these encompass the following subjects: the concept of language as dialogue, the dialogic action game as basic unit, the role of a communicative grammar, the definitions of speech acts, of dialogue and of coherence; the topics of communicative competence and of convention, and the problem of dialogue typology; finally, the distinction between common purposes and individual goals of a dialogue is made (pp. 86-90). To these ten principles Weigand adds five guidelines for future research, situated on a theoretical as well as on an empirical level (pp. 91-92).[10]

Cognition, and Some Other Psychologic Aspects

In regard to a psychology interested in dialogic processes, for example, Dialogical Self Theory (DST, e.g. Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), Weigand's transgression of the narrow linguistic boundaries – which argue for nothing but the reduction of language to structure – is particularly interesting. Her notion of human linguistics claims to address the complex beyond the linguistic pattern and involves behaviour explicitly. Cognition comes to play a role as related to behaviour, it is recognized by Weigand as a part of language use. Specifically, Weigand unfolds the dimension of cognition in two ways and situates cognition on two sides: the side of the communicative means, and the side of meaning. Starting with the meaning issue, she develops and presents a model integrating language use and cognition (p. 99, 105).

---

[10] See also the ten premises of the theory of the action game, pp. 271-272. Ordering and structuring, positing principles and premises are procedures often found in this book, due to Weigand's enterprise of constructing "human linguistics": this necessitates a general level of explanation; to this comes a meta-theoretical level, reflecting diverse theories and approaches, including the one own in its development.

Concerning the first side, communicative means come into play precisely because the perspective on language is enlarged to include purposeful linguistic actions, and because these actions not only have to follow rules and patterns but have to adapt to a complex, dynamic, ever-changing surrounding (p. 272, 326) – thus to a fundamental uncertainty, incalculability of what will happen next, and how, this is where probability becomes important. Starting with a functional whole – the action game – and recognizing the interlocutors as its agents, Weigand states that taking communicative actions is pursuing specific dialogic purposes, with specific dialogic means. As the agents are explicitly acknowledged, the means not only include verbal means, but also cognitive and perceptible (often also called visual) ones (p. 273); besides speaking, thinking and perceiving are needed, as human beings deploy "all their abilities": linguistic, visual and cognitive means are used together (p. 100, 159, 273, 276).

Weigand hence states that "[s]peaking is always accompanied by thinking which goes far beyond what is expressed in the verbal utterance" (p. 273-274). This involves presuppositions, conclusions of various types, both rational and conventional, as well as moment-by-moment judgements, ad hoc associations, and non-conventional suggestions and presumptions (p. 272, 273). It is clear that from the stance of an observer it is often impossible to decide what utterance type occurs, and it is only "from within" the dialogic action game – by the interlocutors themselves – that such a decision is possible. Weigand argues here against corpus linguistics[11] and the notion that language is comprehended in the registered signals, the elements on the empirical level (p. 267).

But something else happens in 'humanzing' linguistics, something comes to the fore that leads linguistics not only into activity or action theory, but also into language psychology and philosophy: the relationship between thinking and speech, and the relationship of these both to activity, to the living dynamics of human beings. Thus, opening the language system to language use and acknowledging the actors of this use leads to what I think belongs to one of the most important questions in human sciences, often enough avoided by disciplinary fences. The dynamical aspect of this relationships (thinking – speaking – acting) is reflected by the aspects Weigand lists, beginning with presuppositions. Worth noting, all aspects show themselves to be time-sensitive, some being situated more before the speech act is performed, some others more alongside or simultaneously, others afterwards and in regard to the next action to be undertaken. There is a *time flow* which changes and alters what is both said and thought, the history of the exchanges alters these very changes, their meaning, their form, and their structure.[12]

---

[11] To the field of corpus linguistics see e.g. McCarthy and Sampson (2005).

[12] Jakubinskij (2004) addresses these changes in dialogue, for instance in abbreviations. The historicity of dialogical exchanges is also addressed by Lyra and Bertau (2008), in continuation of Jakubinskij.

Especially with the notion of presuppositions Weigand approaches issues of language psychology, as it has been addressed since Miller (1971).[13] The language psychologist Hörmann has fruitfully developed Miller's approach, relating presuppositions and the utterance, and opening another perspective on "communicative means". According to Hörmann (1976), the utterance is the continuation of preceding suppositions and assumptions, the utterance *completes* ('vervollständigt') the speaker's assumptions, and, as such, the utterance *may alter* these assumptions (Hörmann, 1976, p. 165). Hörmann aims at the entanglement of speech and actions, and sees speech as "pursued activity with other means" ('Fortsetzung des Handelns mit anderen Mitteln'). Just as Weigand does, Hörmann insists on examining the function which the utterances has to fulfill within this entanglement.[14]

Taking a psychological stance permits linguists to address the important moment of pursuing or completing which is fulfilled by an utterance on the psychic level, not the least *for the speaker her/himself*. This can be related to the third step in Humboldt's (1994) analysis of reply and address in his lecture on the dual, namely to the clarification of what was meant by the first speaker in addressing the other: a clarification made possible only through the reply of the other.[15] Hence, I think that it does not suffice to see thinking as a kind of helpful process accompanying speech, one which only serves to support the process of coming to an understanding. Seen from the other side, from the perspective of language, language is *not only more* than registrable linguistic elements, it is *also* a formative act, altering thinking, forming it, allowing its clarification through a from-driven reflection (i.e. the act of speaking to someone): language is communication, a constant movement between exteriorization and interiorization.

Cognition is addressed from the first side, the issue of the communicative means, in a way that seems to take thinking and cognition as synonyms ("perceive and think", "visual and cognitive means"). In contrast, thinking becomes a genuinely subordinated process from the second side or perspective, the issue of meaning.

Asking about the meaning of words, Weigand distinguishes three types of meaning according to her general functional stance and way of looking at the minimal action game. Thus, the utterances of the dialogic action game are used for communicative purposes, these are directed at specific states of affairs; there is an activity aspect and a propositional one which states something. Stating something amounts to predicating something of an entity or a process (e.g., to predicate that the rose *is beautiful*; that the reading *is demanding*) – entity and process are hence the

---

[13] Since the 1970s, presuppositions are an intensely discussed subject in linguistics itself; their obvious psychological dimension is investigated in language psychology.

[14] See Hörmann, 1976, e.g., chapter VI.

[15] See, also, Bertau (2009).

reference (*the rose*; *the reading*) of the proposition. According to Weigand's analysis the resulting meaning types are: a) an action meaning, b) a predicative meaning, c) a referential meaning. To each of these meanings corresponds a specific type of expression. To (a) correspond the grammatical construction of the utterance, particles, utterance words; to (b) correspond lexical words (e.g. nouns and adjectives, the so-called open class units); and to (c) correspond grammatical words as units of a closed class (e.g., articles, pronouns) (see pp. 95*ff.*).

These clarifications concern so to speak the surface of the action game, as functional for a specific communicative purpose. The purposeful action game involves the performed or expressed meanings in a threefold way, easily observable on the expressive side in the verbal means used. The level underlying the action game with its three meanings leads beyond and into cognition, and here (p. 103) Weigand makes an important step: she goes from dialogic and social acts to cognition which is immediately associated with a universal dimension – i.e. detached from social and dialogic activities.

Weigand introduces the notion of "meaning positions" as "cognitive concepts formed from minimal units of meaning" (p. 102), these positions are independent of expressions pertaining to an individual language, they are universal concepts. Their relationship to an individual language and its expressive possibilities is clear: "for every complex of universal meaning positions there is a set of different expressions in natural language which are communicatively equivalent" (p. 102-103). A clear-cut distinction is made, leading to a universal cognitive base underlying the manifoldness of usages, of expressions, so the "difference between expressions is often not a difference in meaning but only a difference in use, e.g., *with high/great seriousness* versus *mit tiefem/großem Ernst*" (p. 103)

Thus, "[s]tarting from the expression side will not […] lead us to meaning positions. […] It is not empirical means themselves that may show us how to structure them. Evidence can only be found in a model developed to explain reality" (p. 103). This model further deepens the notion of the detached cognition introduced by the universality feature, as it becomes clear in its development for the predicating area [see (b), above].

Starting rightly with human beings and their ways of perceiving and describing the world, i.e. how they predicate, Weigand posits that *human abilities and mental states* are the base from which to derive specific predicating positions. These abilities and mental states "together form the cognitive basis of language action" (p. 104). The list of abilities encompasses the following: the five senses; cognitive abilities (to think, to perceive, to remember); emotional abilities (to feel); linguistic abilities (to act by speaking, i.e. to make pragmatic claims, to refer, predicate, use communicative means); physical abilities (strength of muscles, physiological processes); and consciousness (p. 104). This list is neither more nor less justifiable than any other list found within the

cognitive psychology literature. The question of what to name and how to group human abilities remains difficult and quite ideological. Nevertheless, one can see – as in most of these lists – that language is acknowledged only in its communicative function and remains otherwise *outside* cognition, thinking, remembering, emotional processes, and consciousness.[16] From the stance of cultural-historical psychology this is questionable, at least in the cases of thinking, emotions and consciousness.[17] The problem is thus, that these processes are conceived not only outside language but also outside a cultural-historical dimension. They become natural, biological and universally possessed by anybody in principally the same form. What differs are the usages of language. Hence, the step to cognition is clearly a step outside socio-cultural conditions and qualities of human life.[18]

A Dichotomy

I have the impression that – precisely because complexity and uncertainty lodging beyond the sentence in language use are recognized – the cognitive base has the function of giving and guaranteeing order. This order is assigned to and located in the individual brain, cognition, body: all conceived more on a biological than a cultural base, that is, conceived outside the incalculable reality of social life. This is corroborated by Weigand's specific notion of the subject's psyche.

This notion of the psyche can be labeled as 'individualistic, non-social, private, totally subjective, including the irrational'. Hence, a strong dichotomy results, a line dividing the outer social and communicative life from the inner individual psychic or mental life. A mediating mechanism is then needed, and this is found for instance in the second type of the constitutive principles, the *innate* Regulative Principles that "mediate […] between self-interest and social integration" (p. 327). The Principles of Emotions and the Rhetorical Principle belong to the Regulative Principles: the first one regulates the opposite emotion – reason, the second one regulates individual – social interests (p. 249-251). To this dichotomy belongs also the fact that the Principles of Rationality and of Convention are *contradicted* by the Principle of Suggestion, standing for irrational tendencies and unpredictable emotions (p. 169). Hence, the other pole of the psyche as labeled above is communication that is, in contrast, 'rational, conventional, social, intersubjective'. From this it can be stated that Weigand's notion of the subject's psyche

---

[16] At the same time, and on another level, cognition is taken as a comprehensive term, involving cognitive and other abilities together with mental states (which are beliefs and volition).

[17] The following studies investigate the role of language in psychological processes: Bartl and Dörner (1998), Holodynski (2006), Werani (2009). Vygotsky (1999) and Vološinov (1986) highlight the role of language for consciousness from a more theoretical point of view.

[18] Weigand tends to see even the life of human beings as more biologically than culturally determined, referring lastly to the survival drive to explain purposive interactive activity and the nature of human competence-in-performance (p. 248).

is framed by an understanding where the individual is seen as totally subjective, i.e. as having emotions and irrational tendencies, both unpredictable and difficult to control.

Precisely because Weigand starts from the whole and vivid activity of human beings, she rightly acknowledges the irrational and emotional dimension in our communication. For human beings, linguistic action includes practical actions, it is based on linguistic, visual and cognitive means, and it always involves evaluations, specific interests, and emotions (p. 166-167).[19] Hence, "language as purposive *rational* activity" (p. 85; emphasize added) is always achieved by actors "subject to emotions" (p. 167). In this, Weigand indeed reaches beyond speech act theory and all such approaches "obsessed only by the rational and conventional" (p. 165). But, as the inclusion of evaluative dynamics is done *outside* communication, i.e. as a force to be regulated in order to communicate intersubjectively, the possibility of including psychological aspects into communication is lost. Simultaneously, sociality is excluded from psychic processes, it is excluded from the self's dynamics. Thus, language as performed speech cannot play a role in the dialogic self, in consciousness, or in any cognitive process. Particularly, language is not conceivable with a formative function: forming the self, forming consciousness, thinking, and remembering.[20] Taking such a formative position toward language is not, of course, the mainstream position, neither in linguistics nor in psychology. But a serious dialogic approach to human beings must at least reflect this dimension of language.

This is not to ask a linguist to be a psychologist. Rather, it is a reflection addressing an individualistic psychology that invites the kind of exclusion observable in Weigand's theory – the exclusion of language from thinking, from consciousness, from the self. A cultural psychology, or a psychology in the tradition of the Soviet cultural-historical school, offers a different view, quite far from individualistic-monologic psychology which assumes an absolute privacy and naturalness of the inner life. It is a psychology near to a dialogic approach to self, as is DST, and thus also near and *in need of* a genuine dialogic approach to language, as Weigand's theory is. In cultural psychology (e.g. Cole 1996), concepts of consciousness and of specific psychic processes such as thinking and remembering are conceived on the basis of a fundamental developmental relationship between social and individual symbolic processes. Specifically, dialogic processes within the self can be modeled within the perspective of social dialogic processes.[21]

---

[19] The topic of evaluation is also addressed in the Rhetorical Principle, see especially pp. 129ff.; to the related topic of interest see especially pp. 250-252. Human being's interests, needs and abilities are even the key opening up "the complex mix of order and disorder of the action game" (p. 348).

[20] Only some hints to the rare literature here: Larsen et al. (2002), Steels (2003), Bertau (1999).

[21] A cultural-historical psycholinguistics underscoring the role of language in psychological processes is proposed in Bertau (2011a; 2011b).

Even emotions are not outside the 'sociologising' of our psyche, they are part of our culturally specific activities.[22] In contrast to the kind of individualistic psychology Weigand follows, assuming emotions to be "non-rational, non-predictable, non-conventional phenomena" (p. 172), and human beings as "victims of [their] emotions" (p. 176), I would opt for the view that emotions are highly conventional – and this is not only a matter of their display or their expression. Rather, it is a matter of their acquisition and their performance in the social world, as social events. Hence, a West-European middle-class mother may well show a different verbal form in being angry and admonishing her child than a mother from a lower class doing the same: the intonation style, the loudness of voice, the chosen words and their arrangement may be quite different. Both mothers are displaying their own individual emotion toward their child, but simultaneously they do – express and experience – it in a genre and social specific way.[23]

The exclusion of the psychological dimension of verbal communication also has an impact upon Weigand's notion of understanding. The outer social and communicative life is coupled with "coming to an understanding" (derived from German 'Verständigung'), whereas the inner individual psychic life is coupled with "understanding" (derived from German 'Verstehen'). So, coming to an understanding as *interactive* purpose stands in opposition to understanding, as *individual* mental act or cognitive ability. Thus, the dividing line distinguishes acting linguistically from understanding: "While coming to an understanding describes action, understanding represents a mental precondition of linguistic action: the hearer-oriented side of the speech act" (p. 30), the hearer, having understood, produces the reaction building up the dialogic game.

Understanding is obviously conceived by Weigand as happening only in *the other*, the addressee of the first action, not in the speaker her/himself as that speaker both utters and listens to his/her own words and receives the reply of the addressee. But, understanding *while* talking is underscored by Linell: "In fact, speakers speak not only to be understood, but also in order to understand what they themselves say and think" (1988, p. 46). As aforementioned, understanding through the reply of one's addressee is already highlighted by Humboldt (1994). This notion can also be followed up in Bakhtin, for whom understanding is related to acting linguistically in an indissociable way and, as such, it is itself interactive – not as a precondition, but a preparation for the next verbal act:

---

[22] The 'sociologising of psyche' is an allusion to Vygotsky's "sociologising of all consciousness" (1999, p. 278) and said in the very same vein, i.e. "the recognition that the social moment of consciousness is primary in time and fact." Holodynski (2006) offers a theory of emotions based on cultural-historical psychology.

[23] The contrast between the poles "subjective/individual/irrational" *versus* "conventional/rational/social" can especially be grasped in Weigand's essay *Emotions in dialogue* (pp. 165ff.).

Thus, all real and integral understanding is *actively responsive*, and constitutes nothing other than the initial preparatory stage of a response […]. And the speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth […] (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69; emphasis added)

Vološinov (1986) is even more explicit, and views understanding as a process operating with the necessary participation of inner speech, an act where signs respond to other signs.[24] In sum, dialogically oriented human sciences have to re-think the crucial notion of understanding, and particularly the role language plays not solely as an *object* to be understood, but as a *means* of understanding. The functioning and functionality of language as addressed by Weigand is important precisely in regard to a psychic dimension: it is the key to the question of how language may function as a means for psychic processes.

My final remark concerns a consequence resulting from the dichotomy, it concerns the figure of the third. Concentrating on action and reaction as the minimal action game, Weigand, referring to Humboldt (1994), does however not follow Humboldt in his third step: the clarification, through the reply of the second speaker, of the concept the first speaker uttered in audible words to the second speaker. The concept becomes clear for the first speaker *him/herself*, because it is uttered and receives reply, i.e. it is reflected by another.[25]

 I think there is here a form of completion which goes beyond the first speaker's acceptance or evaluation of the reply; it seems that this third turn addresses *both* previous turns.[26] The third turn in Humboldt can be seen as expression of an understanding, as such it cannot be part of Weigand's conception. Thus, the third move in Weigand does not seem to offer a new quality and is therefore seen as a reaction to the second turn, taken itself as action.

Within the area of dialogic thinking, Markovà (1990) insists on the third step (not necessarily a turn) as belonging to a dialogic understanding of dialogues. With the third step, Markovà aims to go beyond externally related events, beyond mere additions from which, according to Markovà, no new quality emerges. In contrast, internally related events cannot be disconnected, precisely because a new, a third moment emerges from their mutual dependency, from their actual interaction: "as the two phenomena interact, co-determining each other, they give rise to a new, i.e. a third, phenomenon that is qualitatively different from the two constitutive ones" (1990,

---

[24] See Vološinov 1986, part I, chapter 1.

[25] For more details on Humboldt's concept see Bertau (2011b) and Bertau (2012).

[26] This corresponds to the model by Mehan (1985), but rejected by Weigand because it is "without cogent justification" (p. 77).

p. 133). Recently, I proposed another version of the third, which argues that only witnessed verbal performances are performances at all. Thus, the third does not so much emerge from an actual interaction, rather, it is more the condition to any interaction, at the same time, it is present and addressed in any interaction (Bertau 2010).

Conclusion

Edda Weigand's book is inspiring, it is a rich resource to think seriously about the dialogicality of language, and the present review can be seen as the very effect of this seriousness and richness.

One of the qualities to be highlighted is that Weigand's approach is explicitly open to a necessary enlargement of the arena of dialogue "by embedding dialogue analysis within the analysis of human action in general" (p. 338) – an invitation and a challenge to all scholars working in the dialogic approach. In turn, Weigand's dialogue analysis can itself also relate to these approaches as well as to empirical work in psychology and linguistics supporting a dialogical view. A striking development in psycholinguistics can be mentioned here, namely the turning away from the traditional study of language comprehension and language production in isolation to the study of dialogue as put forth by Pickering and Garrod (2004, 2005), and fruitfully followed up for instance by Koostra et al. (2009). The notion of alignment, which plays a central role in describing the performance of dialogue partners, can be further developed within dialogue analysis.

Two basic procedures can be observed in Weigand's book: a reversal in the order concerning the point of departure for the modelling and investigation of language in use, and a "beyond" leading the conception of language into the open-endedness of dialogical dynamics. Thus, Weigand's approach does not treat pragmatics as a "coda" to linguistics, but as the aspect to begin with, and this aspect is nothing but human activity, a human being's life as a perceiving, thinking, speaking and listening social being, *with others*. This approach is hence an important endeavour for linguistics – obviously so reluctant to embrace a genuine dialogical view of language – as it recognizes theoretically and methodologically the other as interlocutor, and includes otherness as a grounding category. In this respect, bringing Weigand's approach into interaction with linguistic and psychological approaches explicitly addressing otherness, such as Markovà's and Linell's work, would certainly be fruitful.

The core aspect brought to the fore by a pragmatic and dialogical view is understanding language as a process in its *open,* incalculable nature: thus, language is an activity between meaning making and negotiating individuals whose performances go beyond the rules. Hence, for Weigand, the primary point of departure is the wholeness of the language action performed – *performance* is the process, which further points to the dynamics and vivid materiality of speech. Here, too, it would be fruitful to

relate Weigand's work to investigations of speech as temporal, patterned and conventional formation in the sense proposed by Bose (2001).

I agree completely with Weigand about the challenge of a dialogical approach, of a genuine dialogical conception of human activities, and I am glad that she offers with her thoughtful thinking and investigating one important step in this enterprise. It is an enterprise that should go beyond specialized disciplinary interests and that should acknowledge the outstanding importance of language for humans as socio-cultural, conscious, and symbolic beings bound to alterity.

References

Aumüller, M. (2006). Der Begriff des Dialogs bei Bachtin und Jakubinskij. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik 51(2)*, 170-195.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. In M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech genres and other late essays* (pp. 60-102). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. (Original work from 1953-54)

Bartl, C. & Dörner, D. (1998). Sprachlos beim Denken. Zum Einfluß von Sprache auf Problemlöse- und Gedächtnisleistung bei der Bearbeitung eines nicht-sprachlichen Problems. *Sprache & Kognition 17,* 224-238.

Bertau, M.-C. (1999). Spuren des Gesprächs in innerer Sprache. Versuch einer Analyse der dialogischen Anteile des lauten Denkens. *Sprache & Kognition, 18*(1/2), 4-19.

Bertau, M.-C. (2010). *Alter, ego, and polis: Witnessed self formations*. Paper presented at the Sixth International Conference on the Dialogical Self, Athens (Greece), September 30 – October 3, 2010.

Bertau, M.-C. (2011a). *Anreden, Erwidern, Verstehen. Elemente einer Psycholinguistik der Alterität.* Berlin: Lehmanns Media.

Bertau, M.-C. (2011b, in press). Language for the other: Constructing cultural-historical psycholinguistics. *Tätigkeitstheorie – Journal für tätigkeitstheoretische Forschung in Deutschland [Activity Theory –Journal of activity-theoretical research in Germany], 6.*

Bertau, M.-C. (2012). Inner form as a notion migrating from West to East: Acknowledging the Humboldtian tradition in cultural-historical psychology. In A. Yasnitsky, R. Van der Veer, & M. Ferrari (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural-historical theory.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bertau, M.-C., Gonçalves, M. M., & Raggatt, P. T. F. (2011, in press). *Dialogic formations: Investigations into the origins and development of the dialogical self*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Bose, I. (2001). Methoden der Sprechausdruckbeschreibung am Beispiel kindlicher Spielkommunikation. *Gesprächsforschung – Onlinezeitschrift für Interaktion, 2*, 262-303.

Clark, H. (1996). *Using language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology. A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Holodynski, M. (2006). *Development of emotions and emotion regulation*. New York: Springer.

Humboldt, W. von (1994). Ueber den Dualis (1827). In J. Trabant /Ed.), *Wilhelm von Humboldt, Über die Sprache. Reden vor der Akadamie* (pp. 143-169). Tübingen and Basel: Francke.

Jakubinskij, L. P. (1923/1979). On verbal dialogue. *Dispositio, IV*(11/12), 321-336. (J. Knox, Trans. and Introduction).

Koostra, G. J., van Hell, J. G., & Dijkstra, T. (2009). Two speakers, one dialogue. An interactive alignment perspective on code-switching in bilingual speakers. In L. Isurin, D. Winford, & K. de Bot (Eds.), *Multidisciplinary approaches to code switching* (pp. 129-159). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Larsen, S. F., Schrauf, R. W., Fromholt, P., & Rubin, D. C. (2002). Inner speech and bilingual autobiographical memory: A Polish-Danish cross-cultural study. *Memory, 10*(1), 45-54.

Linell, P. (1988). The impact of literacy on the conception of language: The case of linguistics. In R. Säljö (Ed.), *The written world* (pp. 41-58). Berlin: Springer.

Linell, P. (1998). *Approaching dialogue. Talk, interaction and contexts in dialogical perspectives*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Linell, P. (2009). *Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically. Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making*. Charlotte (NC): Information Age.

Lipari, L. (2010). Listening, thinking, being. *Communication Theory, 20,* 385-347.

Lyra, M.C.D.P. & Bertau, M.-C. (2008). Dialogical practices as basis for self. *Studia Psychologica VI,* 173-193.

McCarthy, D., & Sampson, G. (2005). *Corpus linguistics: Readings in a widening discipline.* New York: Continuum.

Markovà, I. (1990). A three-step process as a unit of analysis in dialogue. In I. Markovà & K. Foppa (Eds.), *The dynamics of dialogue* (pp. 129-146). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Markovà, I., & Foppa, K. (1990). *The dynamics of dialogue.* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Mehan, H. (1985). The structure of classroom discourse. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis, Vol. III* (pp. 120-131). London: Academic Press.

Miller, G. A. (1971). Empirical methods and the study of semantics. In D. D. Steinberg & L. A. Jakobovits (Eds.), *Semantics. An interdisciplinary reader in philosophy, linguistics, and psychology* (pp. 569-585). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connell, D., Kowal, S., & Kaltenbacher, E. (1990). Turn-taking: A critical analysis of the research tradition. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 19,* 345-373.

O'Connell, D., & Kowal, S. (2003). Psycholinguistics: A half century of monologism. *American Journal of Psychology, 116,* 191-212.

Pickering, M. J., & Garrod, S. (2004). Toward a mechanistic psychology of dialogue. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 27*, 169-226.

Pickering, M. J., & Garrod, S. (2005). Establishing and using routines during dialogue: Implications for psychology and linguistics. In A. Cutler (Ed.), *Twenty-first century psycholinguistics: Four cornerstones* (pp. 85-101). Mahwah: NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Riemslagh, M. (2011, in press). *After you. Human sciences on ethics in dialogical counselling*. Dudley, MA: Peeters.

Steels, L. (2003). Language re-entrance and the `inner voice´. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 10*, 173-185.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Vološinov, V. N. (1986). *Marxism and the philosophy of language.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Original work published 1929.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1999). Consciousness as a problem in the psychology of behaviour. In N. Veresov, *Undiscovered Vygotsky. Etudes in the pre-history of cultural-*

historical psychology (pp. 256-281). Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang. (Original work published 1925)

Weigand, E. (2003). *Sprache als Dialog. Sprechakttaxonomie und kommunikative Grammatik.* Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Weigand, E. (2009). *Language as dialogue. From rules to principles of probability.* (S. Feller, Ed.). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Werani, A. (2009). Die Rolle des inneren Sprechens beim Problemlösen. Prüfung eines Konzepts der sowjetischen Psychologie. *Journal für Psychologie 17.* http://www.journal-fuer-psychologie.de/jfp-3-2009-05.html

Yakubinskij, L. (1997). On dialogic speech. *Papers of the Modern Language Association of America (PMLA), 112*, 243-256. (M. Eskin, Introduction & Trans.)