Foreword

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> "No man is an island, entire of himself"
>
> John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, Devotion XVIII

By their very nature *festschrifts* seem to embody a retrospective orientation. They attempt to both celebrate and do justice to a distinguished career, one that has created new possibilities for thinking and acting which we now use as resources for our own work. This is certainly true for Jack Damico, and I am most honored to be able to contribute something to both this volume and the community of thinking and practice that intersects at his work.

However, this volume has an equally important prospective orientation. With its extraordinary group of contributors, it is a call for a future that will move in new and most important directions. What is presented here has profound implications theoretically for how we conceptualize human language and action, and practically for how we care for each other, how we do research on impairments to both language and the body, and how health care should be organized.

I personally grapple with the issues that are the focus of this volume from two equally important perspectives. On the one hand, my professional life, indeed passion, has focused on how talk, the human ability to say something meaningful, is organized through the co-operative actions of multiple participants (for example, both a speaker and different kinds of hearers) within situated human interaction. On the other hand, my father, Chil, suffered a stroke that left him with a catastrophically impaired lexicon (basically significant variants of *Yes, No,* and *And* and meaningful gestures such as numbers). Chil's aphasia was a living presence in our family for over 20 years.

Within a framework that focuses on linguistic competence, it seems reasonable to conceptualize the speaker as an entity, frequently an isolated individual, capable of constructing syntactically complex sentences, with part of that ability emerging from powerful forms of organization within the human brain. Chil, with a vocabulary that could quite literally be counted on the fingers of one hand and virtually no syntax, absolutely failed to meet this

standard. We later learned that at the time of his stroke Chil's neurologists expected him to spend the rest of his life lying in bed in a state of profound isolation.

Instead, he led a very active social life. He used his scooter to go out and have lunch with friends, do his family's shopping at the supermarket, go to Starbuck's for a Frappuccino, go to movies by himself, etc. Moreover, he acted as a rich and powerful speaker in conversation. Indeed, my mother complained that her own voice got lost because everyone became so interested in working out what Chil was saying.

How was it possible for someone with almost no vocabulary or syntax to act as a powerful speaker? Providing an answer to this question requires that we expand our analytic focus beyond the linguistic abilities of the isolated speaker, to take into account what Linell (2009) calls languaging, the dialogic, co-operative process through which multiple parties build utterances and meaning in concert with each other. Basically, by using his limited vocabulary to make precisely placed interventions into the stream of linguistically rich talk being produced by his interlocutors, Chil got them to produce the words he needed to say (Goodwin, 2007). Consider his use of the word ***No*** in Figure 1.[1]

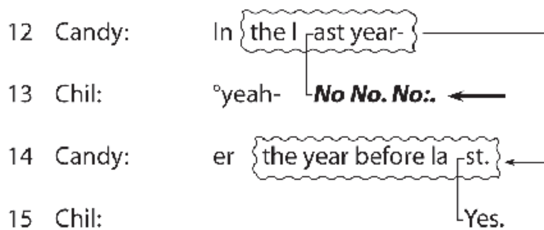

Figure Foreword.1 Making Meaning Together

The participants have been discussing the great amount of snow that has fallen in Chil's neighborhood in recent years. In line 12 Candy starts to make a comment about how much fell "last year." Before this even comes to completion, Chil in line 13 objects with a strong "***No No. No:.***" Rather than standing alone, Chil's ***No*** is a prototypical example of what conversation analysts describe as second pair parts (Sacks, 1992; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Thus, Chil's interlocutors do not treat his ***No*** as an isolated, self-sufficient utterance, or as stating an amorphous objection to the world in general. Instead he was heard to be objecting to precisely what had just been said. Thus, in response to Chil, Candy in line 14 changes what she just said, "last year," to "the year before last."

In a very real sense Chil is the author of what is said in line 14. Candy, the person who actually speaks the words that occur here, said something

different in line 12. Though Chil quite literally does not have the ability to produce the morphemes or syntax that make the statement in line 14, he is in fact acting as a speaker who makes a subtle, complex contribution to what is being talked about. He is systematically able to get others to produce the words he requires, but cannot say himself. His ability to act as a speaker does not reside in him alone, but instead emerges through a process of co-operative action with others. Despite Chil's catastrophically impoverished lexicon, his ability to produce action that indexically incorporates structure provided by the nearby talk of others into what he is saying provides him with the resources to invoke and make use of rich semantics.

The damage that causes aphasia and related forms of language impairment does reside within the brain of the individual. However, talk and interaction with others constitute the place where that impairment emerges into the lived, natural world as something consequential that structures meaning-making and social life in profound ways. As seen in Figure 1, that same social matrix provides the resources through which the limitations of the individual can be partially overcome through co-operative social action (though strong limits on this process remain: see Auer, this volume). What is at issue, and what can be the focus of both therapy and meaningful lives, is not something lodged exclusively within the individual, but a socially organized ecology of meaning-making practices made possible through the participation of multiple actors with varied abilities. Throughout his entire career, Jack Damico (as well as the contributors to this volume) provided crucial theoretical and practical demonstrations of the power of rich social and interactive analysis, from many different perspectives, for our understanding of the varied ways in which human beings can build meaning, action and lives with each other.

The implications of this are no means restricted to either speakers whose ability to produce talk has been impacted, or to special situations such as therapy, or interactions that involve people such as Chil. Such frameworks apply as well to our understanding of how talk and action are organized among fully fluent speakers. In general, and not only for people such as Chil, an action done with ***No*** operates on, ties to, and indexically incorporates resources found within the talk of others it is responding to. Both speakers and utterances can have a distributed organization with actors occupying alternative positions (speaker and hearer, for example) contributing different kinds of materials to a common action. The work reported in this volume allows us to understand with greater clarity crucial, but frequently unnoticed, features of ordinary language use and interaction. These features force us to expand our theoretical horizons for investigating human language and action more generally. In reviewing a number of books about children and others with profound disabilities, Nussbaum (2001) notes that almost all Western theories about human language and social life, from Rousseau to John Rawls, use

as their point of departure a fully competent individual actor, for example, someone with the abilities and social maturity required to enter into a social contract. What is being demonstrated in the work presented in this volume is the importance of replacing the individual as a point of departure for analysis with something like an interactive field within which actors with different abilities situated in alternative positions can construct meaning and action in concert with each other.[2]

This same expanded social and interactive environment for the organization of lived practice is relevant as well to how we conceptualize crucial categories, such as the "patient," in our systems for health care. My father's stroke affected the life of my mother as much as it did his. Suddenly, when she was past 60, she had to provide him with physical care on a daily basis (like many suffering from his kind of stroke, the right side of his body was left paralyzed). She also faced the ongoing task of adapting to the changed ecology, noted above, required for Chil to continue to act as a speaker. Focusing only on Chil as the patient injured by his stroke is inadequate from both a theoretical perspective (as well demonstrated by the chapters in this volume it elides the cooperative processes noted above for the construction of meaning and action in concert with others), and with respect to locating who bears the actual costs of care giving. Though occurring within the skull of an individual, damage to the brain is a profound social event that, like a stone tossed into a still pond, ripples outward to reshape in most consequential ways a network of intertwined lives.

Qualitative research that investigates the social organization of making meaning within human interaction through the many perspectives articulated so powerfully in this volume is especially important at the present moment. Many of the wounded returning from recent wars, such as our interventions in Iraq, are suffering from severe head injuries. There are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that the bottoms of Humvees can be protected much more effectively than the windows at the top, and much greater success in saving the lives of those who are severely injured. Current debates about health care, and a focus on cost-effective treatment for individuals, render invisible the profound, long-term social dimensions of what is occurring. Very young people are returned home in a state that has lifelong consequences for not only them, but also their families and others close to them, who will in fact provide much of their care while never appearing in tallies of care or the cost of war. Qualitative investigation of how lives are actually lived in such circumstances, and how meaning is accomplished through interaction with others, is essential for both developing therapies and for understanding the far reaching consequences of the injury and the dimensions of care.

In sum, this is a very important volume in a number of different ways. As a fitting tribute to the work that Jack Damico has done throughout his

career, it provides a state-of-the-art survey of a range of crucial perspectives for doing qualitative analysis written by many of the top scholars in the field. In addition to its clear and most important implications of therapy, the analytic frameworks it articulates offer new and important ways for conceptualizing the social dimensions of human language, action and meaning making more generally.

Notes

1. See Goodwin (2007) for detailed analysis of this sequence.
2. The research traditions that flow from the work of Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1978) are most relevant here.

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