LUND UNIVERSITY

Social and cognitive explanations of dialogic resonance in everyday conversation

Põldvere, Nele; Johansson, Victoria; Paradis, Carita

2021

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Social and cognitive explanations of dialogic resonance in everyday conversation

Dialogic resonance, or the tendency for speakers to reproduce constructions across speaker turns, is a compelling type of coordination in everyday conversation. In (1), speaker B resonates with A along words, structures and meanings, while at the same time disagreeing with him. Moreover, as indicated by the square brackets, the disagreement is produced in overlap with A's prior turn, a turn-taking pattern that has previously been more commonly associated with agreement (Pomerantz, 1984).

(1) A: she hasn't hitherto been particularly interested in religious things [has she]
     B: [you mean] she hasn't particularly been up at seven AM

In this study, we take a closer look at *why* and *when* speakers make use of each other's contributions in dialogue. What are the social and cognitive aspects underpinning this behaviour? Previous work in two different areas of dialogue research offers different explanations. Du Bois (2014), on the one hand, argues that resonance is a socially motivated phenomenon that occurs for various communicative purposes, while Garrod and Pickering (2004) regard dialogue in general to be an automatic cognitive process facilitated by the reuse of prior expression. In this study, we aim to provide empirical evidence in support of the close association between social motivation and cognitive facilitation in dialogic resonance in everyday conversation.

We explore (i) social motivation through the functions that resonance has in discourse (agreement vs. disagreement) and (ii) cognitive facilitation through measurements of turn transitions. Firstly, based on previous research on the potential for resonance to occur in disagreement (Dori-Hacohen, 2017), we predict that

- resonance is more likely to be used by speakers in disagreement, while non-resonance is the preferred option in agreement.

Secondly, based on the view that the reuse of prior expression has a facilitating effect (Garrod & Pickering, 2004), we predict that

- transitions between speaker turns are faster in resonating sequences compared to when the sequences are constructed anew.

In addition, we explore whether or not there are timing differences between agreement and disagreement.

The sample contains 100,000 words of everyday face-to-face conversation among dyads from London–Lund Corpus 2 of spoken English. Using ELAN, we extracted 260 resonating and 316 non-resonating sequences, and analysed them in terms of function (agreement vs. disagreement) and the duration of turn transitions. Then, we fitted mixed-effects regression analyses to the data to test the predictions above.

The results provide full support for the first prediction. We propose that this is due to the cooperative nature of everyday conversation and the important role that resonance plays in mitigating the force of the ensuing disagreement through linguistic parallels. The second prediction also receives support. We see this as an indication that resonance has a facilitating effect on turn uptake, prompted by the activation of the same linguistic representations in the prior turn. Even though disagreements were expressed later than agreements, their mean durations were still strikingly fast (200–

300 ms). This leads us to conclude that, in resonance, the face-saving intersubjective motivations of resonance combine with its facilitating cognitive effect to promote smooth communication.

References

Dori-Hacohen, G. (2017). Creative resonance and misalignment stance: Achieving distance in one Hebrew interaction. *Functions of Language, 24*(1), 16–40.

Du Bois, J. W. (2014). Towards a dialogic syntax. *Cognitive Linguistics, 25*(3), 359–410.

Garrod, S., & Pickering, M. J. (2004). Why is conversation so easy? *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences, 8*(1), 8–11.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds), *Structures of social action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (pp. 57–101). Cambridge University Press.