PRAGMATICS AT WORK: LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF SHARED INTENTIONALITY

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Abstract

Pragmatic processing has always been an interesting topic which could shed light on perhaps one of the most intriguing phenomena of human beings, that of communication. In my thesis, pragmatic processing will be examined through an ‘outsider’ lens, that of ‘shared intentionality’. The notion of ‘shared intentionality’ (or collective intentionality) has been developed and studied within the realm of philosophy of action (Chant et. al, 2014: 1). A joint act between two or more agents is upheld by an infrastructure of ‘shared intentionality’, which imposes mutual commitment, support, and obligation from all agents in pursuit of a common goal. Communication, viewed as a joint act (Clark, 1996), might surely be examined through the lens of ‘shared intentionality’. The central idea focuses on how ‘shared intentionality’, subserving as the psychological infrastructure, accounts for pragmatic processing in communicative acts. Within the course of pragmatic processing, I would propose and argue that shared intentionality works side by side with the main pragmatic theories in helping both interlocutors reach the ultimate shared goal of the joint communicative act: that of the hearer arriving at the intended meaning by the speaker.
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I. Introduction

Within the field of linguistics, pragmatics is considered a relative newcomer, yet its growth in a short span of time (compared to the development of other linguistics fields such as phonology or syntax etc.) is undeniably exponential. A clear-cut definition of this emerging field is still of a debatable matter, even among pragmaticists. In Mey’s words:

Pragmatics is the study of the conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society.

(Mey, 1993: 42)

Specifically, Mey’s definition of pragmatics aims to draw focus on the social (or societal) perspective of language users. At a more general level, the definition highlights several areas of focus of the field: “conditions”, “human language uses”, “determined” and “context of society”. In layman’s terms, this definition could be interpreted as such that pragmatics studies and accounts for the ways human beings communicate using ordinary language (notions such as human beings as ‘users’ and ‘communication using everyday language’ are covered under the “human language uses”). These “ways” of language uses are not sporadic or random, but rather, possess ‘regularities’ (Chapman, 2011: 73); such regularities form the “conditions” of language uses, and the formation is “determined” by the “context of society”. Mey’s perspective towards pragmatics seems to resonate with that of Grice when the latter attempted to describe the general norms or rules, which people do adhere to when having conversation with one another. Grice labeled these rules as the “Cooperative Principle”:
Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(Grice, 1975: 26)

Grice’s Cooperative Principle (which was then further divided into four Categories with more specific maxims) comes under the form of an imperative, but by no means did Grice mean it as a ‘rule of etiquette’ or ‘a guide to good social behavior’ (Chapman, 2011: 74); rather, his Principle is best taken from an observation’s point of view, that of describing the ways according to which “human language uses” operate. Interestingly, the Cooperative Principle lies under an overarching account of human interaction which stipulates human beings’ “impulse towards cooperative behavior” (Chapman, 2011: 74). This behavioral account is perhaps most apparently demonstrated in human communication. The Cooperative Principle does not only offer a view on how communication works, but can also serve as a sounding board, based on which we could interpret what our interlocutor means or tries to convey as opposed to what is said, or in Grice’s terminology, how we could derive ‘implicature’ (what is implicated) from what is said.

In my thesis I would like to examine human communication processes, more specifically I’d like to focus on how people extricate pragmatic meaning (through pragmatic processing), from an ‘outsider’ bird’s eye view. The ‘outsider’ view comes from a social, philosophical theory developed by modern philosophers of action, namely the notion of ‘shared intentionality’ (or collective intentionality, or “we” intentionality). The Big Four of collective intentionality, as Chant et. al referred to, are Michael Bratman, Raimo Tuomela, John Searle, and Margaret
Gilbert (Chant et. al, 2014: 2); their influential theories contributed to shape this theory of action, in reply to the basic question of how a joint action differs from an individual one. If we were to take communication, or language use, as a social, cooperative joint action (another proposal which has been deeply discussed in Herbert Clark’s book *Using language*), then we would come to my thesis’s central point of interest:

How does the theory of ‘shared intentionality’ account for how people communicate using everyday language; more specifically, can the notion of ‘shared intentionality’, subserve as the psychological infrastructure and explain the pragmatic processing in everyday communication?

The idea runs parallel to that of Tomasello’s proposal regarding the role of shared intentionality in communication under an evolutionary point of view when he examined the origins of communication (Tomasello, 2008: 11-12). In his work, however, the interaction between shared intentionality and pragmatic processing has not been investigated. And here lies my very point of interest. In short, my argument could be visualized (or illustrated) according to the following diagram:
The structure of my thesis will be divided into three parts (indicated by the encircled numbers). The first two parts are introductory and preparatory, in the sense that the two foundations will be discussed in preparation for the argument.

- The first part will focus on communication/language use and its intrinsic component, i.e., pragmatics; within this section the main pragmatic theories will be presented. The pragmatic theories will illustrate how people communicate using everyday language, and how meaning is explicated.

- The second part will focus on the notion of ‘shared intentionality’ as explored under the philosophical inquiry on joint action. This is illustrated as the dotted-line rectangular figure in the diagram. Shared intentionality, in general, “is [what]
necessary for engaging in uniquely human forms of collaborative [joint] activity in which a plural subject ‘we’ is involved: joint goals, joint intentions, mutual knowledge, shared beliefs” (Tomasello, 2008: 6-7).

- The third part will focus on the central argument of my thesis: should human communication be considered a joint action, then ‘shared intentionality’ would provide the psychological infrastructure for the pragmatic process (since pragmatics plays an inherent part in everyday communication and language use). In other words, could this “we” intentionality account for the specific ways on which human communication operates?

Within the third part, the proposed framework of shared intentionality will be analyzed in comparison with Austin and Searle’s Speech act theory, Grice’s Cooperative principle and Clark’s notion of joint communicative joint act, in order to illustrate shared intentionality’s role in pragmatic processing.
II. Pragmatics and its role in communication

In this first part an overview of pragmatics, its intrinsic role in communication and its main theories will be presented. The reason for this focus on the field of pragmatics is due to the fact that it occupies a central role in communication, and that communication and communicative acts lay the foundation for the thesis’s central idea (which will be discussed in the third part). This part will be further divided into two sub parts: the first will cover a general overview of the field, and in the second part an account of pragmatics’ main theories will be presented.

1. Pragmatics – the new emerging field

In this first sub part an overview of pragmatics will be presented; such overview will certainly not attempt to cover every aspect of the field, but will rather serve as an introduction to this new emerging field of linguistics in order to provide the background for the second sub part (where the main theories of pragmatics are introduced). Different notions revolving around the field such as meaning, (communicative) functions and context will be touched upon since they are intrinsically interwoven in pragmatics’ main theories.

Human communication is inherently a fundamental, interesting part of our life and our species evolution. Empirical studies have also provided proof that other animal species do communicate, however such communication systems fail in comparison to that of human’s in terms of complexity and intricateness. As human beings, we are driven towards “being social”, or being part of a community, or on a higher level, a society. According to Coelho & McClure (2016: 65), under evolutionary perspectives, “cooperation is instinctual”. The reason is that,
since the very beginning of human history, our ancestors have benefited from cooperation in the primitive environment. Human beings (including pre-hominids and early hominids) are social animals. Precisely for this reason, we could survive only by cooperation (Coelho & McClure, 2016: 69). This is why one of the most powerful ways to sustain our own survival, and that of a society, is cooperation, of which one of the most powerful tools is communication. As pointed out by Harder (2009: 65), the evolution of communication occurred among “social groups” due to the enhancement of the collective survival and existence by caching on “naturally available information” created by communication. Such behavior has been observed in animal social groups like the ‘alarm calls’, from which the safety of all members of the group benefits, thus securing collective group survival.

Among human communication system, human languages play a fundamental, central role. A whole scientific discipline, i.e., linguistics, has been developed and dedicated to the study of languages, incorporating various fields and branches on different levels. The major, traditional, or so-called ‘core’ components of linguistics comprise of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (Chapman, 2011: 10). These mainstream components study language as a “formal, isolated and identifiable system in its own right” (Chapman, 2011: 10). Language used for communicative purpose, however, does not operate entirely and separately on its own. More often than not, the essence of human communication lies not in ‘what is said’, but on ‘what is meant’; one linguistic form could convey one meaning in one specific context, and yet another in a different setting. Understanding how languages work as a separate system such as phonology, syntax or semantic would help one to gain an in-depth knowledge of language from a scientific view; however in order to communicate successfully, such knowledge is not
sufficient. Within the field of linguistics in general, pragmatics is a study precisely about how people communicate using the so-called ‘natural’ language.

Pragmatics – the study of the relationship and interplay between language use and contexts in which it is used (Birner, 2013: 2) – on the other hand, is a relative ‘newcomer’ field compared to the other core components of linguistics. Within the field of pragmatics itself, there doesn’t seem to exist a clear-cut definition, or perhaps more importantly, one that is agreed upon or mutually shared by pragmaticists and linguists. In layman terms, pragmatics could generally be understood as the study concerned with ‘meaning in context’ (Chapman, 2011: 1). More specifically, such statement could be understood as ‘what people mean rather than what they say’, or ‘meaning in use rather than literal meaning’, among many other definitions (Chapman, 2011: 1). What ‘meaning’ and ‘context’ denote is in itself a debatable issue. Such issue will be further explored later on.

In order to define pragmatics, one of the most usual methods is to distinguish it with other (adjoining) fields of study (linguistic or beyond). According to Mey (1993: 42), who traced back to the root of the verb ‘to define’: ‘to define’ means “to impose an end or a boundary (cf. the Latin word finis ‘end’; plural fines ‘frontier’).” Defining pragmatics thus means identifying and delineating its frontiers with other neighboring fields of research. In the Anglo-American tradition, pragmatics is distinguished from semantics (Archer et al., 2012: 4). The so-called semantics/pragmatic borderline lies in the aspect of meaning which the two disciplines are concerned with. Semantics investigates meanings that are truth-conditional, while pragmatics is concerned with other types of meaning (conveyed by a speaker as well as inference drawn from what is said), with a number of factors (e.g., context, attitudes, socio-cultural aspects etc.)
taken into consideration (Archer et al., 2012: 4). The two meanings are distinguished between semantic meaning of sentences, and the pragmatic meaning of utterances. There are then a number of topics that provide the data for the examination of the semantics/pragmatics borderline, such as logic and natural language; mood; presupposition and deixis (Chapman, 2011: 19). Let’s take a look at the following example which illustrates how logic works in determining meanings. Logic is seen under the perspective of philosophy of language as the source to explain how meaning works in language (under semantic aspect). Pragmatics, on the other hand, is interested in many other ways with which meanings are drawn from natural language; ways that logic-like rules cannot account for (Mey, 1993: 25).

When two propositions (called \( p \) and \( q \)) are conjoined, according to logical rule, we have a logical conjunction, symbolized by the form \( p \land q \); the order of the two constituents does not matter: \( p \land q \) is logically equivalent to \( q \land p \). Let’s consider the following example:

(1) Marta got drunk and went home.

Logical conjunction determines the truth condition of a complex proposition from the truth conditions of the propositions joined together, no matter the order of the constituent parts. Thus, according to this logical rule, (1) would be equivalent to (2):

(2) Marta went home and got drunk.

Although (1) and (2) have the same truth conditions, in everyday language use, the two utterances clearly do not have the same meaning. Our everyday language conjunction \( and \) and the logical counterpart \& obviously do not have much in common. In the case of (1) and (2), the
everyday-language *and* seems to denote chronological order; in this case, it could be understood as "*and then*".

From the examples given above, one of the prominent concepts that come to our mind is that of 'meaning'. Oftentimes in everyday communication, one might come across the expression “What do you mean (by that)?” Such question could be understood as a distinction between ‘what is meant/conveyed’ vs. ‘what is literally said’. Some people would classify semantic meaning as ‘sentence meaning’, and pragmatic meaning as ‘utterance meaning’. (Within pragmatic meaning, some pragmaticists would further divide between ‘speaker meaning’ and ‘utterance meaning’, i.e., when we take the hearer’s perspective in consideration (Archer et al., 2012: 6). However, since everyday language and communication, which takes place in real life, already presuppose the speaker as well as the hearer, therefore pragmatic meaning will be from now on referred to as ‘utterance meaning’). The former can also be characterized as ‘literal meaning’, while the latter as ‘intended/inferred meaning’ (Birner, 2013: 23). This dichotomy between ‘literal meaning’ and ‘intended meaning’ is unfortunately not as straightforward as it is when it comes to define pragmatic meaning. Drawn from the examples (1) and (2), one could say that semantic meaning has to do with truth-conditional semantics, while pragmatic one with other types of meaning (Archer et al., 2012: 4). The problem with this distinction is that such boundary between semantics and pragmatics might not be clear-cut, due to the fact that “lexical elements are constantly drawn into the pragmatic sphere by means of changes associated with grammaticalization and particularly ‘pragmaticalization’” (Archer et al., 2012: 4). Furthermore, there is a diverse range of pragmatic properties and factors, as well
as pragmatic rules and principles that we follow in order to produce and interpret language in everyday communication.

Another approach to the use of language could be the focus on different functions that utterances carry. This notion plays an essential part in 'speech act theory', which was proposed by Austin in his book *How to do things with words*. As suggested by the title of his book, Austin was interested in different things that we do using language, not just in language in its descriptive form (Chapman, 2011: 57). He opposed to the ‘descriptive fallacy’ in philosophy (Austin, 1975: 2-3), which stipulates that the only meaningful function of language is to make statements of fact. Specifically, this philosophical idea was closely linked to logical positivism, an approach to philosophy associated with the Vienna Circle group (whose philosophers came from scientific background). According to this school of thought, only a language that could be scientifically determined as ‘true’ or ‘false’ is regarded as noteworthy of discussion (Chapman, 2011: 48). On the other hand, ‘natural language’ posed illogical and imprecise nature, and thus only sentences that could be verified as ‘true’ or ‘false’ are considered ‘meaningful’. Logical positivism distinguished sentences as ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’: the first category are sentences where the true/false verification lies inherently in the properties of the language in which it is expressed, without having to take into consideration the world or people involved in the statement/communication process. The second, ‘synthetic’ category includes sentences in which it is possible to determine if they are true or false through empirical observation.

Let’s take a look at the following examples:

(3) Triangles are three-sided.

(4) The Moon rotates around the Earth.
(3) is an example of an analytic sentence, whereas (4) is that of a synthetic one. (3) is meaningful simply by the words they contain. (4) could be determined as ‘true’ or ‘false’ by scientific observations. Synthetic sentences are thus called because there are different elements brought together to make them. This type of sentences is considered ‘meaningful’ only if they are verifiable through identifiable evidence or empirical researches. This rule leaves out many expressions in natural language, which according to logical positivism, are considered ‘meaningless’, or ‘pseudo-statements (Austin, 1975: 2), that is, when there is no identifiable process of verification. Most controversially, these ‘outcast’ sentences include also all “religious, metaphysical or ethical statements” (Chapman, 2011: 49), such as:

(5) Lying is morally wrong.

(6) God is always with us.

According to logical positivists, statements such as these are not false, since they cannot be tested empirically, and thus are simply considered meaningless, and not worthy of serious discussion.

Coming back to Austin and his book, *How to do things with words*: Austin, among other English-speaking philosophers who led the ‘Ordinary language philosophy’, reacted against logical positivism for several reasons. Chapman (2011: 50) identified three reasons for Austin’s reaction. Firstly, Austin was opposed to the logical positivists’ dismissive view to natural language. He believed that ordinary language was ‘naturally adapted to explain and describe human beings’ experience and understanding of the world’ (Chapman, 2011: 50), and that philosophers should do well shifting their focus to everyday use of language for this precise reason. Secondly, Austin thought that logical positivism’s focus was exclusively on the
language's function to make statements of fact, and such focus was too narrow to describe all
the various functions that ordinary language assumes, i.e., all sorts of other things that
language could do such as to request, order, promise etc. among others. Meaningful sentences
deemed by the logical positivists are mostly declarative statements, and must be understood
literally. Austin called this the ‘descriptive fallacy’ (Austin, 1975: 3): a mistaken notion that only
the descriptive function of language (to make statements of fact) was to be considered
interesting or noteworthy of consideration to philosophy. Thirdly, Austin was against the
category of ‘analytic’ sentences, which were considered true simply due to the words they
contained. Such notion of fixed, unquestionable meaning of words troubled Austin, since he
considered that the meanings of words could change depending on the context in which they
occurred. In his own words, “there is not simple and handy appendage of a word called ‘the
meaning of (the word) x” (Austin, 1940: 30). In fact, the ‘descriptive’ function of language is one
of the many functions that one could do using language. In his book, Austin proposed the
‘speech act theory’, which attempted to elaborate on these functions of language use. Speech
act theory has been the very ‘founding assumptions of pragmatics’ (Chapman, 2011).

Halliday, the founder of systemic functional linguistics, offered another perspective
regarding the functions that utterances can have. He identified three functions of language,
namely ideational, textual and interpersonal function (Halliday, 1970: 17). The ideational
function sees language as a means to experience and interpret the world. The interpersonal
function refers to the grammatical choice of language that a speaker employs in order to
express her attitudes and influence on the attitudes of her interlocutor. The textual function, on
the other hand, has language itself as the object. Textual function is the “function of language
in constructing a text” (Archer et al., 2012: 7). Halliday’s functions are termed metafunction, precisely because they are concerned with the functions of language, as opposed to the functions of language use.

Austin’s speech act theory was based on the grounds that the literal meaning of a sentence might be well distinct from what the speaker meant in a particular context. From here we have come to another concept within the field of pragmatics that is immensely vast in definition, regarding what it might denote and comprise of: that is, the concept of ‘context’. An utterance could assume different meanings depending on the context where it is used, or rather, in order to determine the meaning of an utterance, one has to take into consideration the various factors involved in the communicative act: the speaker and hearer, the relationship between the interlocutors, as well as other situational variables, to name a few. For example:

(7) It was a great performance!

In one context, (7) could be interpreted as a compliment that the speaker expresses towards a certain event, given that she truly appreciates it. In another context, however, (7) could well be interpreted as ‘sarcastic’, with which the speaker expresses the exact opposite opinion of the event compared to the previous interpretation. The second interpretation might also depend of the way which (7) was delivered (speaker’s tone), that is, the prosodic element of communication. Now if we look at the following utterance:

(8) Such a performance!

The subtle difference between (7) and (8) is that in (7), the speaker’s attitude towards the performance was stated explicitly (whether it was meant sincerely or sarcastically), whereas
in (8) no such attitude was expressed. In order to correctly interpret (8), not only does the hearer have to take into account the speaker’s attitude and tone, but also the quality of the performance (situational variables). The notion of ‘context’ has been studied in various disciplines, but there’s hardly a unanimous agreement regarding the features that help to shed light on utterances’ meaning (Archer et al., 2012: 7). The role of context (not only limited to conversational context, but extends also to the socio-cultural aspects pertaining to context surrounding a communicative act) in interpreting ‘what is meant’ also delineates a borderline between theoretical pragmatics and social (or socio-cultural) pragmatics. This borderline lies in the type of data used by the two branches of pragmatics, which reflect also their different aims (Chapman, 2011: 6). Most often, theoretical pragmatic choose examples that might not have been uttered by an actual speaker, but those that help to reveal certain features of language use in order to arrive at a set of systematic explanation about language use (Chapman, 2011: 6). Theoretical pragmatics is concerned more with the way meaning can be conveyed with finite resources of a language and within different context, thus attempts to establish the general rules or principles which govern language use (Chapman, 2011). Social pragmatics, on the other hand, employs utterances from real life conversation for analysis. It then takes into account various elements that are relevant to the conversation, especially the socio-cultural aspect of language use. In different cultural settings and different backgrounds of interlocutors, utterances might assume different meanings. According to Ochs:

...‘situation’ is usually broadly conceived and includes socio-cultural dimensions a member activates to be part of the situation at hand such as the temporal and spatial
locus of the communicative situation, the social identities of participants, the social acts
and activities taking place, and participants’ affective and epistemic stance.

(Ochs, 1996: 410; emphasis in original)

The above-quoted definition is a much broader definition of context, going beyond the
linguistic context, which is limited to the grammatical boundary of utterances.

The role of context can be illustrated in an even more extreme light when we examine
the case of polysemy of the use of single words (not utterances), and its context-dependency
aspect. The following quote from Moravcsik offered an excellent illustration of this point:

The verb ‘walk’ admits of polysemy. On the one hand, there is a common meaning core,
locomotion with legs in appropriate position. But one has to add: ‘appropriate distance,
covered in an appropriate time.’ For what counts as a walk for a toddler’s first attempts
does not count as a walk for a normal, healthy adult, and the walk of a recovering
patient in a hospital is still a different matter. What counts as a walk depends on
different senses of the word.

Moravcsik (1998: 35-36)

How we understand the verb ‘walk’ depends on the context, more specifically, on
speaker’s intention, the purpose of the conversation etc.

The above-discussed definition of pragmatics, together with notions such as meaning,
functions and context will serve as a background for the next part, which will present the main
pragmatic theories (mainly classical pragmatics). These pragmatic theories make up the
foundation for the central idea of my thesis.
2. **Main theories within the field of pragmatics – classical pragmatics**

In modern day pragmatics, one could say that the ideas of how language works coming from the Ordinary language philosophers have laid the foundational stones for the development of pragmatics (Chapman, 2011: 56). Their shift of focus to the use of everyday language, especially as a reaction against the logical positivism’s dismissive view towards daily language that we examined above, is of immense importance for the field of pragmatics. Specifically, these philosophers’ concern shifted “from reduction, reformulation, and translation to description and elucidation” (Sbisà, 2011: 15). Thus, the object of focus shifted from scientific language to ordinary language. We will examine hereby two ‘related but separate’ theories, which could be considered the ‘classical’ theories of pragmatics (Chapman, 2011: 56). One theory is called ‘Speech act theory’, developed by Austin (and further elaborated by his pupil Searle), the other is the work of Austin’s Oxford colleague Grice, within which the central idea revolved around ‘implicature’.

i. **Speech act theory**

When Austin proposed his famous ‘Speech act theory’ and his study of meaning in natural language, his aim of doing so was not particularly concerned with pragmatics (Chapman, 2011: 52). Instead, Austin’s view of his work was a contribution to the field of philosophy, not linguistics. Austin’s speech act theory drew attention to the use of language that pertains to the performance of action (Sbisà, 2011: 4). Austin believed that besides the use of language as to make statement of facts, or purely to describe or report some aspect of the world, we use language to ‘perform’ a wide range of actions. Initially in his book *How to do things with words*, he proposed a distinction between the first type of sentences, which he
labelled ‘constatives’, and the latter type of sentences for which he introduced the new term ‘performative’ (Austin, 1975: 6). The importance of such distinction lies in the definition of performative, which, according to Austin, is used to perform some sort of action. Performative sentences may in fact take various forms as in the examples below:

(9) I will finish all my meal.

(10) I promise I will finish all my meal.

Austin called (9) a primary performative, and (10) an explicit performative. The latter indicates clearly what act had been performed (a promise), while the former left room for uncertainty as to what act it performed, whether it was a promise, or a thought, or a prediction. In the case where (9) was indeed a promise, it essentially carried the same ‘function’ or goal as (10), that is, the performance of a promise. The ‘forms’ of the two sentences, which correspond to its lexical and grammatical features, might differ, while their ‘functions’ could be the same. It is therefore crucial to draw a distinction between the ‘form’ of a sentence and the ‘function’ it performs (Austin, 1975: 99). Austin later on took a different turn with the distinction between constative and performative. Speech acts, whereas previously divided into different types, now shared common properties. He proposed that each utterance carried three different acts, which he himself coined ‘locutionary act’, ‘illocutionary act’, and ‘perlocutionary act’ (Austin, 1975: 103-109). Let’s examine the following example: let’s say it’s an utterance from a speaker called Marta, to a hearer called Ana.

(11) Don’t you have to go home by now?
‘Locutionary act’ is basically describing what has been said, with clarification of any disambiguation and reference assignment. So in (11), ‘you’ refers to Ana, the hearer, and ‘now’ denotes the moment Marta uttered the question. In other words, ‘locutionary act’ is the act of saying something (Austin, 1975: 94). The ‘locutionary act’ of (11) is a question from Marta to Ana inquiring about the fact whether Ana has to go home at that time or not. ‘Illocutionary act’ is an act that the speaker wishes to perform in saying something (in 11 the illocutionary act is a request) (Austin, 1975: 99-100). In general, we tend to be ‘indirect’ when we want to order someone else to do something. In (11), by referring to the fact that Ana might have to go home, Marta actually might want to ask Ana to leave. The third act identified by Austin is called the ‘perlocutionary act’, that is, the “‘consequential effects’ invoked in the audience, or the intention or purpose of the speaker by saying such and such” (Austin, 1975: 101). In (11), whether Ana leaves or not (effect on audience), and Marta’s intention in persuading Ana to leave (speaker’s intention/purpose) make up the perlocutionary act.

The locutionary act describes an act of saying something, while the illocutionary act describes that in saying something. One may wonder why such distinction possesses an immense importance to the study of language. The reason lies in the fact that, by distinguishing the ‘form’ and ‘function’ of language use, Austin drew a significant attention to the nature of natural human language (Chapman, 2011: 63).

Within the realm of ‘illocutionary acts’, speech acts are divided into five categories in terms of their illocutionary force: ‘verdictives’, ‘exercitives’, ‘commissives’, ‘behabitives’ and ‘expositives’ (Austin, 1975: 151). These categories were based on ‘verbs’ that ascribe to these categories (Austin, 1975: 150): verdictives share its roots with ‘verdict’, which comprise verbs
that mean ‘give a finding as to something’ like ‘convict’, ‘rule’; exercitives are concerned with ‘exercising of powers, rights, or influence’ by making a decision and include verbs such as ‘appoint’, ‘order’; commissives commit the speaker to a certain action, like ‘promise’, ‘guarantee’; behabitives are speech acts with which the speaker expresses her own attitudes and reactions towards others’ behavior, for example ‘thank’, ‘apologize’; and lastly, expositives are to do with ‘making clear how what is being said fits into its context’, and examples include ‘deny’, ‘testify’ and ‘concede’ (Austin, 1975: 151-152, 160; Chapman, 2011: 64).

Within the framework of ‘speech act theory’, Austin identified the set of conditions, or circumstances, which provide the ground for a performative to count as successful, which he termed ‘the doctrine of the Infelicities’, or also known as ‘felicity conditions’ (Austin, 1975: 14-15). The set of felicity conditions comprised of three types. The first required ‘certain conventional procedures and forms of words’, together with the presence of people involved to make such act successful. The second condition called for the correct and complete execution of the procedure. The third required the existence of certain thoughts, feelings or intentions on the part of the performer, and that they genuinely have these. As we could see, the first two rules apply to formal procedures, such as a wedding ceremony in a church (conventional procedures, certain forms of words uttered by the participants, mainly the priest, the bride and groom, the complete execution of the ceremony etc.).

Austin’s speech act theory was then further developed by one of his pupil at Oxford, John Searle. Searle was impressed with Austin’s conceptualization of language use in terms of speech acts, but he disagreed with his tutor regarding how these speech acts were classified, i.e., he disagreed with Austin’s assumption that “a classification of different verbs is eo ipso a
classification of kinds of illocutionary acts”, and that “there is no clear or consistent principle or set of principles on the basis of which [Austin’s] taxonomy is constructed” (Searle, 1979: 9-10, emphasis in original). Searle classified speech acts into five categories; unlike Austin, whose categories were divided in terms of verbs, Searle’s types were distinguished based on the nature of the speech acts themselves, that is, the nature of the acts committed by the speaker by an utterance. Searle’s categories are: ‘assertives’, ‘directives’, ‘commissives’, ‘expressives’, and ‘declarations’ (Searle, 1979: 12-16). The notion of ‘illocutionary force’ – the act performed by an utterance – was of central importance to Searle, since the illocutionary force indicator reveals “what illocutionary force the utterance is to have; that is, what illocutionary act the speaker is performing in the utterance of the sentence” (Searle, 1969: 30). The ‘illocutionary force’ under Searle’s perspectives is seen at ‘macro’ level, identified as “the types of things that speakers typically do”, rather than an identification of individual acts (Chapman, 2011: 66). For example, individual acts such as asking, requesting, advising fall under the category of ‘directives’. Specifically (adapted from Searle, 1979):

    Assertives commit the speaker to something’s being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition.

    Directives are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.

    Commissives commit the speaker to some future course of action.

    Expressives express a psychological state of the speaker towards some state of affairs.

    Declarations bring about some change in the world.

    (Searle, 1979: 12-16)
The following examples illustrate the above-mentioned definitions, respectively:

(12) The Sun is a star.
(13) Please go visit your Grandmother this week.
(14) I will help you with moving.
(15) I am proud that you have finished the race.
(16) You are now married.

According to Searle, the types of speech acts do not correspond with specific performatative verbs, and vice versa, individual verbs don’t always denote a particular illocutionary force. Searle’s most important contribution to speech act theory is his notion of ‘indirect speech acts’, i.e., “cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another” (Searle, 1979: 31). This notion is perhaps illustrated most clearly in the category of ‘directives’. It doesn’t come as a surprise that people use different forms to solicit action from someone else; after all, it is not common to ask someone to do something by means of a direct request, or order. For examples:

(17) Close the windows!
(18) Could you please close the windows?
(19) It would be great if you could close the windows.
(20) It’s a bit cold in here...

All the examples above are all directives, and they all share the same illocutionary force, but by no means do they have the same meaning. The illocutionary force is exercised by means of issuing a direct order (17), or asking a question (18), or a statement (19 & 20). In these cases,
Searle distinguished between the ‘primary illocutionary act’, and a secondary, ‘literal’ act (Searle, 1979: 33). These forms of expression could be interpreted as ‘directives’ since they are highly conventionalized in daily communication. It is considered customary to ask a question in order to request someone to do something. The literal meaning of (18) is a question about the (physical) capability of the hearer to close the windows; regarding (19) the requested is issued by expressing the speaker’s attitude towards the (requested) action from the hearer. In the case of (20), things get even stranger, since all that the speaker expressed was merely a statement about how she was feeling. The distinction between illocutionary force and the literal meaning of an utterance could be demonstrated even more clearly with the following examples. Imagine your friend comes over for a visit, and you both are sitting at the table, and you ask her:

(21) Could you reach the water jug?

Similar to what we have just discussed above, (21) could be interpreted as a ‘directive’: asking your friend to pass the water jug. Now imagine a different scenario, where it is obvious that the water jug is out of reach of your friend. In this case, the literal meaning of (21) would assume the role of the primary illocutionary act, that is, to genuinely ask about your friend’s ability to reach the water jug, or it could be an offer to pass her the jug (in the latter situation, the distinction between a primary illocutionary act, an offer, and the literal act, a question, resurfaces; however, the primary act here is different from the first scenario when it is interpreted as a directive). (This example also illustrates the importance of context, that is, under varying contexts, the correct interpretation of an utterance could change).
Searle also retained the concept of Austin’s ‘felicity conditions’, but revised them as: 1) preparatory conditions (necessary facts for the successful performance of the speech act); 2) sincerity conditions (belief/attitudes from the part of the speaker – similar to Austin’s third type of felicity condition) and 3) essential conditions (the intended purpose of the speech act from the speaker’s point of view) (Searle, 1969: 65). For example, for a ‘directive’ to be successfully carried out, the following conditions must be in place (‘H’ for hearer, ‘S’ for speaker, ‘A’ for a future act by H):

Preparatory conditions: H is able to do A. S believes H is able to do A. It is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of events of his own accord.

Sincerity condition: S wants H to do A.

Essential condition: counts as an attempt to get H to do A.

(Searle, 1969: 66)

Searle’s account of ‘indirect speech act’ offers a deeper commitment to the notion that a single utterance could carry different levels of meaning, and that people ‘do’ different things when they communicate in ordinary language. In the case of an indirect act, the primary, literal act could be a question about the preparatory condition (18), or a statement regarding the sincerity condition (19). The case of (20) is quite particular, since the content of (20) does not refer neither to the preparatory condition (the act that the speaker wants the hearer to perform) nor to the sincerity question (the speaker’s wish. (20) is an instance of allusive requests (as referred to by Bernicot et al., 2007: 2116), that is, requests expressed in declarative form in which the action to be carried out, the agent (the requestee of the request,
or the hearer) remain implicit. The implicit request has to be worked out entirely by taking into consideration the context and common ground between the two interlocutors.

   ii. Implicature

   As we have seen so far, in everyday communication, in order to understand what the other is saying, one cannot only rely on the semantic, literal meaning of the words that constitute the sentence. In fact, one must ‘interpret’ what the other is trying to convey. “Interpretation is a tricky affair” (Mey, 1993: 100), and it’s common for misunderstanding to occur. According to Leech (1983: 30), “Interpreting an utterance is ultimately a matter of guesswork, or (to use a more dignified term), hypothesis formation”. Imagine the following situation: I am about to move house, and a friend of mine enquires about the new place location, to which I reply:

   (22) Somewhere in Amsterdam.

   Strictly speaking, ‘somewhere in Amsterdam’ would denote any part of Amsterdam, be it Oost, West, Zuid or Noord (and more specifically, the very road or street where my future place would be). Technically, all these possibilities could apply to ‘somewhere in Amsterdam’. However, if I knew exactly where the new place would be, by giving such a vague answer, my friend might accuse me of being delusive or withholding information. However in real life, it is perfectly normal and acceptable to give (22) as an answer. On top of the literal meaning, (22) conveys also another layer of information, which is that I don’t know exactly where I would move to (yet). The only thing I could offer regarding the whereabouts of my new place is that it would be in Amsterdam.
The question is, how do we reach this additional knowledge? The answer to this question is offered in the work of Paul Grice, another Ordinary language philosopher and Austin’s colleague from Oxford colleague. Grice’s work is the second theory that makes up part of classical pragmatics. Like Austin and others of the Ordinary language philosophy, Grice deemed that the analytical, truth-conditional view towards meaning was too narrow to account for the use of natural language. Grice’s work however differed from that of Austin’s: while the latter attempted to explain what speakers ‘do’ using language (the distinction between surface form and intended function), the focus of the first theory was on the division between literal meaning and intended meaning. It is quite common, and perhaps also quite intuitively so, that what people mean differs well from what they literally say. In his work, Grice attempted to establish a systematic explanation to account for such difference between the two levels of meaning. He also noted that, these differences were not ‘random and unpredictable’, but in fact adhered to some ‘general principles of language use’ (Chapman, 2011: 70). Obviously the interpretation of an utterance, or ‘guesswork’ in Leech’s sense, must first of all derive from the ‘context’ in which the communication takes place. Mey’s regarded Leech’s ‘guesswork’ not just some random working out of meaning, but of a ‘somewhat qualified nature’ (Mey, 1993: 102). According to Mey, all interpretation of utterances “implies some qualified guessing depending on the context”. As discussed earlier, the ‘context’ encompasses a vast array of properties such as the situation in which the conversation occurs, the interlocutors involved, together with their background, the shared, mutual understanding of both speaker and hearer regarding the information discussed etc. However intricate the conditions for the (correct) interpretation of an utterance, real life communication, as a matter of fact, occurs quite smoothly (obviously
with occasional occurrence of misunderstanding). Furthermore, what qualifies people as competent ‘guessers’ depends not only on the incorporation of context, but also, and more importantly, relies on the intuitive understanding of how language use works. The latter denotes precisely what Grice observed in everyday communication: people somehow do follow the ‘general principles of language use’ when they want to convey what they mean. Vice versa, to interpret what is conveyed by someone, one also relies on the assumption that the speaker adheres to such principles (Grice, 1989: 86).

The two levels of meaning of utterances in natural language were termed ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’ (Chapman, 2011: 74). To a certain extent, ‘what is said’ corresponds roughly to the literal meaning, or, the truth-conditional meaning, together with elucidation on any ambiguous elements (reference assignment etc.). Any speaker that possesses linguistic knowledge of a language would be able to understand this type of meaning. ‘What is said’ might provide a necessary starting point in order for a hearer to interpret ‘what is implicated’, even in cases where ‘what is implicated’ diverges significantly from ‘what is said’. Anyhow, to understand ‘what is implicated’, or, to grasp an implicature (Grice, 1975: 24), one would have to add more information and also understand the ‘general principles’ of language use.

In the realm of ‘implicature’, Grice then identified two types of implicatures: conventional implicature and conversational implicature (the distinction between these two types will be discussed in more details below). Mey (1993: 99) explained the notion of ‘implicature’ by tracing back to its etymological root and at the same time offering an interesting analogy to shine a light on this concept. ‘Implicature’ comes from the verb ‘to imply’, which itself denotes “to fold something into something else” (from the Latin verb *plicare*).
‘to fold’) (Mey, 1993: 99). What is ‘implied’ then must have been ‘folded in’, and in order to be understood, it has to be ‘unfolded’. It could intuitively be perceived from the etymological root the ‘implicit’ nature of implicature, or in other words, “things that left unsaid but conveyed” (or intended to be conveyed from the speaker’s point of view) (Mey, 1993: 99). Let’s take a look at Grice’s description and classification of ‘implicature’.

From example (22), we could see that there’s an additional layer of information on top of the semantic meaning; this additional meaning, derived via pragmatic principles, is labelled ‘conversational implicature’ by Grice (Grice, 1975: 26). In sum, conversational implicatures are implicatures extracted from the combination of context and adherence to the general principles of language use. Such adherence is part of Grice’s central claim in his theory. Grice proposed that human beings are inherently propelled towards cooperative behavior, which is perhaps most apparent in communication. Grice labelled this set of principles ‘Cooperative Principles’:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(Grice, 1975: 26)

The superordinate Cooperative Principle mentioned above was then divided into four categories, or ‘maxims’.

Category of Quantity
1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Category of Quality

1) Do not say what you believe to be false.

2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Category of Relation

1) Be relevant.

Category of Manner

1) Avoid obscurity of expression.

2) Avoid ambiguity.

3) Be brief.

4) Be orderly.

(Grice, 1975: 26-27)

The Category of Quantity indicates the amount of information appropriate to be conveyed, that is, it should be just enough, not too much nor too little. The Category of Quality has to do with the truthfulness of a contribution. The Category of Relation has only one maxim, and it is concerned with the ‘relevance’ of the information provided. Grice himself discussed the many questions that arose out of this maxim, such as “questions about what different kinds and focuses of relevance there may be, how these shift in the course of a talk exchange, how to
allow for the fact that subjects of conversation are legitimately changed etc.” (Grice, 1975: 27).

The fourth Category, that of Manner, is not concerned with the information itself, but more with how the information is conveyed.

As mentioned, a hearer will arrive at an implicature on the assumption that the speaker adheres to these cooperative principles. Grice (1975: 31-32-33) gave three ‘groups’ of examples to illustrate his theory. Group A involves examples where the observation of the cooperative principles is straightforward such as the following:

(23) Visitor: I’d like to see a movie.
(24) Local: There’s a theater around the corner.

In replying to the visitor’s remark, the local’s answer in (24) led the visitor to believe that there’s a theater nearby, which is open, and also has movies in showing (instead of theatrical plays or other types of performances) etc. This additional layer of information derived from (24) does not lie in its literal meaning, or ‘what is said’. The proposition that the nearby theater is the one where the visitor might want to visit (where she could see movies and not other types of entertainment) is a conversational implicature, given that the local is being cooperative and following the maxim of Relation.

Group B contains examples in which a maxim is violated due to a clash with another maxim (Grice, 1975: 32). Example (22) discussed earlier is a perfect example for this case: by saying that ‘I’ll move to somewhere in Amsterdam’, I have violated the first Maxim of Quantity, that is, to make the contribution as informative as is required (the exact location of my new place where I’ll be moving to). However, due to the fact that I do not know exactly where I’d be
living (only that it’ll be in Amsterdam), I am not in a position to be more specific because otherwise I would have to disregard the second Maxim of Quality (which requires me to not say anything for which I do not have adequate evidence). In this case, I, the speaker, was faced with a clash between two maxims, and conversationally implicated that I do not know exactly where I would be moving to.

Group C examines examples where ‘what is said’ seems to go blatantly against what is expected, so that a new interpretation is required if the principles are assumed to be maintained. These situations occur when a speaker, under Grice’s word, ‘flouts’ a maxim for communicative effect (Grice, 1975: 33). This perhaps offers the most interesting cases, where it’s most obvious to see the cooperative principles ‘at work’. These are utterances that, at the level of ‘what is said’, are significantly uncooperative, but turn out to be extremely cooperative.

According to Grice, cases of ‘flouting’ could help reveal how ‘figure of speech’ is at work, such as metaphor or irony. If somebody were to say:

(25) You are the rain to my soul!

If we were to take (25) by its literal meaning, it is apparently and logically false. A human being cannot be the rain, thus, at the level of ‘what is said’, (25) is false. However, if the speaker is still adhering to the cooperative principles (or, if we assume that she is), we are then prompted to reach a further, non-literal interpretation: by saying (25), the speaker wants to attribute certain qualities of the rain to the hearer, such as that of nourishing (as in the quality of rain to soil). In this case, the speaker has flouted the first maxim of Quality to convey a conversational implicature. The fact that, in the course of normal, daily conversation, we are so
accustomed to reach the additional layer of meaning (the implicature) without being baffled by the seemingly absurdity of such statements, is the very proof of the existence of the Cooperative Principles, and our (automatic) adherence to them. This also shed light on the nature of Grice’s theory. By no means were the Cooperative Principle proposed as ‘guidelines’ or ‘rule of etiquette’ (Chapman, 2011: 74), even though the Maxims were expressed as imperatives. By proposing this theory of cooperative principle, Grice was in fact trying to summarize and describe, in a systematic way, the ‘general norms by which people actually operate’ (Chapman, 2011: 74).

In order to recognize a conversational implicature, according to Grice, one could refer to the five properties he identified: cancellable, reinforceable, non-detachable, calculable and non-conventional.

Within the category of Conversational implicatures, Grice identified a sub-category which he described as Generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs) (Grice, 1975: 37). All the examples given above regarding conversational implicatures are those of Particularized conversational implicatures (PCIs); they are ‘particular’ to the specific context in which they occur (Grice, 1975: 37). By contrast, Generalized conversational implicatures are ‘default’ implicatures (Grice, 1975: 37)): they share the five above-mentioned characteristics of Particularized conversational implicatures, and are indeed dependent on context. However, the difference is that GCIs do not depend on the ‘peculiarities’ of context, but rather, they ‘would normally (in the absence of special circumstances) carry such-and-such an implicature’ (Grice, 1975: 37)). Returning to the very first examples discussed (1) and (2): “Marta got drunk and went home” (1) and “Marta went home and got drunk” (2). Compared to the truth-conditional
meaning of “and”, that is, the logical conjunction, “and” from (1) and (2) seems to carry an additional meaning of ‘and then’. Such additional meaning, according to Grice, is not only a conversational implicature, but more specifically, an example of a GCI, due to the fact that, when “and” is used to described two events, people tend to assume that they occur in the order in which they have been stated. Such assumption could be cancelled due to some particular aspect of context as in (27):

(26) Marta did manage to get home, and she got completely drunk last night!

In (26), “and” didn’t carry the ‘and then’ implicature, but the opposite: the two events narrated seem to occur in the reverse order. There seems to be also a register of ‘surprise’ on the part of the speaker, that the first event described could happen after the second event. (1), (2) and (26) show that GCIs are ‘default’ implicature, which will generally occur “in the absence of any particular indications to the contrary”, and will be cancelled otherwise (Grice, 1975: 37).

As opposed to ‘conversational implicatures’, Grice identified another category of implicature, which he coined ‘conventional implicature’. Conventional implicatures are the additional meaning that certain words carry; they are implicatures because these additional meanings are not part of the ‘truth-conditional’ meaning. However, contrary to ‘conversational implicatures’, the meaning that conventional implicatures contribute to ‘what is said’ is a property of these words, instead of being dependent on the context. Examples for conventional implicatures are meanings derived from words like ‘therefore, but, even’ etc. For example:

(27) He is a guy; he is strong.

(28) He is a guy; he is, therefore, strong.
In terms of truth-conditional meaning, the two parts of (27) and (28) are the same. However, in (28), ‘therefore’ indicates a sense of ‘consequence’, and this sense is a conventional implicature, since it doesn’t belong to ‘what is said’. If one were opposed to either part of (27), then one could say that the (27) is false. But if one were to agree with both elements, but opposed to the idea that there’s a causal relationship between them, he/she wouldn’t say that (28) was strictly false, but was opposed to the ‘conventional implicature’ of (28) and not to either element (especially if one were a feminist advocate...)

The above-presented general overview of pragmatics and its main theories discussed the potential difference between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is meant’, the various layers of meaning, and a variety of functions that language use can perform. According to the Ordinary Language Philosophers, people use daily language not only to make statement of facts, but (most of the time) to ‘do things with words’. On the other hand, on top of ‘what is said’, ‘what is meant’ plays a critical part of human communication. Grice’s Cooperative principle provides an invaluable insight into the general ways with which people communicate. This section therefore provides one of the two foundations for my thesis’s main idea: the interaction between shared intentionality and pragmatic processing. In the next section, the second foundation will be presented, which is that of ‘shared intentionality’.

III. Shared intentionality

This second part places focus on the notion of ‘shared intentionality’, the ‘outsider’ lens through which pragmatic processing will be examined. An overview of ‘shared intentionality’ is presented, together with its diverse properties.
The idea of ‘shared intentionality’ (which comes under various terms, such as ‘we intentionality’, collective intentionality, we-mode etc.; from now on the two terms ‘shared intentionality’ and ‘collective intentionality’ will be used interchangeably) has been the focus of philosophers of action in the last 30 odd years (Chant et. al, 2014: 1). The theory was hypothesized and developed as an answer to the question of how a joint action differs from an individual one. Take the famous example from Margaret Gilbert, that of an extremely simple activity of two people walking together, as opposed to coincidentally walking side by side: in walking together, you and I agree and understand that we do something together, that is, a joint action (Gilbert, 1990: 1; Gilbert, 2009: 15; Gilbert, 2013: 8). The difference between the two phenomena, which on the external, behavioral level might seem identical, is the collective intention to go for a walk together. Such difference can be clearly seen if I start to veer off in another direction without any announcement whatsoever. In the latter case of you and I coincidentally walking side by side, my veering off wouldn't mean anything. But in the first case of the two of us taking a walk together, my behavior would at first create some sort of surprise, and also bafflement from your side, and even, perhaps understandably, also concern for my mental well-being. Your reaction could also include irritation and/or some sort of reprehension, and probably also a demand that I’d continue what we were doing together, that is, taking the walk. The range of reaction on your side in this case indicates various aspects which ‘shared intentionality’ comprises of: a joint action performed together with a joint goal, each party carrying out his/her own part, commitment to the joint activity (up to the level of ‘obligation’), and so on and so forth.
The theory of ‘shared intentionality’ was developed from the four most influential theories of Michael Bratman, Raimo Tuomela, John Searle, and Margaret Gilbert, to whom Chant et al. (2014: 2) referred to as “the Big Four of collective intentionality”. Each of these four philosophers has offered significant contributions under different perspectives, which shine a light on the constitution of collective or shared intentionality. Intuitively, the term ‘shared intentionality’ presupposes ‘intention that is shared among agents who participate in a joint action’. Such ‘joint intention’ is not merely a collective of individual intentions that happen to match. Human beings are, inherently, intentional agent, but when we place ourselves in a joint act, our intention is shared in pursuit of a common goal. The following part will present and discuss the theories proposed by the Big Four.

Bratman, on his account of what he termed ‘shared cooperative activity’ (SCA), identified three features characteristic of SCA: (i) mutual responsiveness, (ii) commitment to the joint activity, and (iii) commitment to mutual support (Bratman, 1992: 328). Mutual responsiveness requires participators in the joint act to be responsive to the intentions and actions of the other. The responsiveness is mutual in the sense that each agent knows that the other will be correspondingly attentive. In the example of taking a walk together, I will be attentive to your behavior, such as your pace: if you’re a slow walker, I will attempt to adjust my walking pace to match with yours without keeping my own speed and walking ahead of you, which makes the distance between us get further and further. You and I would also make ourselves committed to taking the walk together, and thus the afore-mentioned incident when I veer off without any announcement wouldn’t occur. In a joint act, each of us does not only make sure that we carry out our role in according to the joint intention and joint goal, but also
that we would be committed to mutually supporting each other. In the event that, during our
walk, you start getting tired and slow down, I would likewise slow down so that you could get
some breath, or maybe offer you some water. I do this with the intention to help you also to
fulfil your part and your role in the joint act.

Furthermore, Bratman stipulates the following attitudes necessary to SCA, which runs as
follows (with J being the joint act):

(1)(a)(i) I intend that we J.

(1)(a)(ii) I intend that we J in accordance with and because of meshing subplans of
(1)(a)(i) and (1)(b)(i).

(1)(b)(i) You intend that we J.

(1)(b)(ii) You intend that we J in accordance with and because of meshing subplans of
(1)(a)(i) and (1)(b)(i).

(Bratman, 1992: 333-334)

The subplans are personal and belong to each of the agent. This account of shared
intentionality follows an individualistic approach, since “each agent intends that the group
perform this joint action in accordance with subplans (of the intentions in favor of the joint
action) that mesh” (Bratman, 1992: 332), meaning by that, the existence of individual subplans
are prior to that of the joint act, even though Bratman did indicate that each participator guides
their own subplans to mesh with one another ‘in favor of the joint action’, something he called
‘interdependent’ and ‘interlocking’ intentions. On the contrary, Gilbert’s view towards shared
intentionality is a full blown collective account, in which ‘people share an intention when and
only when they are *jointly committed* to intend *as a body* to do such-and-such in the future’ (Gilbert, 2009: 167, emphasis in original), and that agents are “jointly committed with one another in some way a ‘plural subject’” (Gilbert, 2009: 182). According to her, “a joint commitment is not a concatenation of personal commitments” (Gilbert, 2009: 180), hence, the shared intention in this sense is top-down, *a priori* to any personal intentions and subplans. Viewed under this light, the derived commitments possess a more solid and a greater stability, since neither agent can revise nor change the derived individual commitment at their own will (Gilbert, 2009: 184), or that neither can decide a shared intention for both (Gilbert, 2009: 170). This doesn’t mean that personal intentions do not exist, but rather they are derivable from and guided by the joint commitment (Gilbert, 2009: 184). For example, if you and I were to take a walk together on a day when there will be a woman’s march in the city, and thus several streets would be closed down, and the sub-plan we shared involves me checking which closed streets would there be, I may devise my personal intention to open my laptop and look up this information on Google, as a way of accomplishing my individual commitment to check the information. The fact that each person is bounded to the shared intention imposes a sense of obligation to each party. And precisely for this sense of obligation that Gilbert proposes two criteria for an account of shared intention: the ‘obligation criterion’ and the ‘concurrence criterion’ (Gilbert, 2009: 173). The obligation criterion is stipulated as follows:

> an adequate account of shared intention will entail that each party to a shared intention is obligated to each to act as appropriate to the shared intention in conjunction with the rest.

(Gilbert, 2009: 175)
The stipulated obligation imposed on each party denotes the consequent sense of ‘rights’, ‘owing’ and ‘owning’: binding ourselves to our shared intention, we owe each other action appropriate to the shared intention, and I have a right against you to such action and vice versa, and precisely due to this right to your action, in some sense, I could claim ownership to that action, and vice versa (Gilbert, 2009: 175-176). For this right, in the case of me veering off during our walk together (an inappropriate action to our shared intention, or a ‘breach’ to such intention), you can both rebuke me for this inappropriate action, and at the same time can also demand that I return should our joint action be fulfilled.

As shown from the example discussed above, the obligation criterion is most apparent in case of a breach of joint action, or a non-conformity to the agreed shared intention (by performing an action inappropriate to the shared intention). The second criterion, also derives from the obligation sense, occurs in the event of a ‘breach of contract’. The concurrence criterion runs as follows:

an adequate account of shared intention will entail that, absent special background understandings, the concurrence of all parties is required in order that a given shared intention be changed or rescinded, or that a given party be released from participating in it.

(Gilbert, 2009: 173)

Suppose that, during our walk, before veering off (that is, our shared intention would be changed or rescinded), I tell you that I’m not going to walk together with you anymore, one of your possible reactions could be “You can’t just decide like that!” (example adapted from
Gilbert, 2009: 173). What you mean is that I am not in a position to unilaterally decide to stop doing what we have been doing together. This indicates the need for concurrence (from your side) to my changing our joint act: that is, in order for me to act not in accordance with (or against) our shared intention, I would have to come up first with at least some explanation, and more importantly, to ask for your concurrence for me to change or rescind the joint act. The reason is because I have an obligation towards our joint intention, and I owe you the appropriate behavior (on my side) in the pursuit of our joint goal. Note that, by inserting ‘absent special background understandings’, Gilbert meant ‘prior agreements’ regarding the event when either one of us wants to be ‘released’ from the joint act (Gilbert, 2009: 174). If, prior to our joint walk, I told you that I felt quite tired that day, so at any given time I might not be able to continue walking together, your reaction would be quite different from the original example.

Tuomela, in his study of ‘intentional social action’, proposed several concepts. Proper social actions are those that are “performed jointly by several agents we shall call multi-agent actions” (Tuomela & Miller, 1985: 27). The central claim which introduced concepts related to collective intentionality ran as follows:

...all intentional joint many-agent actions will involve some relevant we-attitudes, viz. we-intentions and mutual beliefs plus the we-proattitudes underlying them.

(Tuomela & Miller, 1985: 27)

The conditions necessary in making an action to be jointly intentionally performed are the fact that the agents possess a relevant group-intention expressing the agents’ common goal
(which they share), at the same time they are aware of others’ intentions, and believe that the others are aware of their own (Tuomela & Miller, 1985: 28-30). We-intentions and the presupposed beliefs guarantee ‘group cohesion’, at the same time make up ‘group pressure’ which inhibits deviation in each member’s expected action (Tuomela & Miller, 1985: 40). Such notion seems to be reminiscent of the sense of obligation and duty proposed by Gilbert, as discussed earlier.

In his book *The philosophy of sociality: The shared point of view* (2007), Tuomela discussed collective intentionality under the group’s point of view, which he termed *we-perspective* (Tuomela, 2007: 3). Under this view, Tuomela introduced the notion of we-mode and I-mode. The we-mode expressed we-perspective when one functions ‘as a group member’ within the group, and one functions ‘as a private person’ in the group context, it is the I-mode (Tuomela, 2007: 3). Within the context of the I-mode, collective intentionality might or might not be involved, and when it is, the I-mode turned into ‘progroup I-mode’. Based on this distinction, Tuomela proposed that collective intentionality could be divided at different levels, or in his own words, it possesses ‘different senses’, ranging from weak to strong (Tuomela, 2013: 6). The weak sense of collective intentionality lies in the [progroup] I-mode, in which the agents possess ‘an attitude with the same content’ and mutual belief that they have it. The strong kind of collective intentionality (we-mode) occurs when the agents ‘intend to act together as a group’ with *collective commitment* and *collectivity condition* (the sense of ‘we are in this together’) (Tuomela, 2013: 6). The latter version of collective intentionality expresses a full-blown version of joint intention, since the action is carried out ‘as a group’ with collectively intentional action. The strong sense of collective intentionality obviously resonates with
Gilbert’s idea of an irreducible we-intention. Going back to the example of taking a walk (together or not): if you and I just happen to have the idea, or an intention of taking a walk (probably also on the same route and at the same time), and I know that you have this idea, and you, vice versa, know that I do too, and if all of these premises occur without us intending to take the walk together (and thus without consequent agreement or planning to meet up at a certain spot at a given time etc.), then our intentions are at the I-mode. Under the I-mode, since each of us function as a private person, I can absolutely change my idea (maybe to take another route, or to start the walk at a different time than yours, or to abandon the whole idea of taking a walk altogether), it wouldn’t affect you in any way whatsoever, or more importantly, to us doing it together. But if we both intend to take the walk as a group (in this case composed of two people), and it is considered under the full-blown view of joint intention, then collective commitment and collectivity condition apply. It’d involve us making some kind of agreement, such as where and when to meet up, perhaps also which route to take. And obviously neither I nor you would even dream of changing our idea on a whim (at least not without some justification). As Tomasello humorously (but also correctly so) put it, acting occasionally this way (breaking up joint intention, acting uncooperatively etc.), one could be thought of as purely eccentric, and acting consistently this way ‘will lead to some kind of psychiatric diagnosis and possible removal from mainstream society’ (adapted from Tomasello, 2008: 92).

Now you might chuckle fondly and think that perhaps it is a bit too extreme for such a detailed description and planning for only a walk together, and also for the possible ‘punishment’ for a deviation or change of plan, and might possibly, perhaps also understandably, never consider agreeing to a walk with anyone at all, ever again. However, I’d
like only to emphasize that the example and the consequent details entailed only serve to illustrate the points so far discussed.

In his book *The construction of social reality* (1995), Searle argued that collective intentionality is absolutely irreducible to individual intentionality (Searle, 1995: 24). The ‘sense of doing something together’ is crucial to collective intentionality (as opposed to two actions which happen to synchronize, such as two people happen to walk side by side, without the shared intention to do it together), and individual intentionality is derivable from (and not constitutive of) collective intentionality (again, these points are parallel to those of Gilbert’s) (Searle, 1995: 24-25). Searle illustrated the individualistic view of we-intentions (Figure 2) and the alternative view, which is his holistic view (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Individualistic view of we-intentions

(Searle, 1995: 26)

Figure 3. Searle’s holistic view of we-intentions
Up until now, the notion of collective intentionality has been discussed and illustrated mostly as constitutive of social joint act between two agents. Social acts, according to Searle, are thus considered if they involve collective intentionality (Searle, 1995: 26). Social acts can manifest itself in the act of two people taking a walk together (an example which we are by now extremely familiar with), or they can scale up to the constitutional level, involving institutionally constructed notions such as money, marriage, and government. Notions such as the building blocks of social reality, brute and institutional facts, social facts, are not of central focus in my thesis. Nor is the argument on the (ir)reducibility of collective intentionality. Having said that, my stance on this point slants towards the side of irreducibility of shared intentionality, where the sense of ‘we are in this together’ transcends each other’s individual intention, commitment or effort. All in all, the take home message in this part is the essence of shared intentionality: in a joint act together, you and I share ‘our intention in pursuit of a common goal; each of us will do everything not only to guarantee that we each do our part but also to stay alert of the other’s attention and action (viz. mutual responsiveness, in order to coordinate our own action to ensure the successful outcome of the other’s execution of their own part, and in case that the other is in difficulty, then also to extend support from our side); shared intentionality also encompasses mutual commitment, up to the point of mutual obligation. All of these properties occur on the premise that it is in our common knowledge that the other will do exactly the same thing. Out of the above-discussed Big Four of Collective Intentionality, each offered their own perspectives and also their own concepts as well as terminologies; however, whether you and I take a walk together ‘as a body’, or in we-mode, or
‘we-intend’ in our own head, I would venture that what matters most is the sense of ‘we-ness’ that makes up the DNA of our joint intention and action.

The first and second segments (II and III) have put forth the basic notions that make up my thesis’s main point of interest: the interaction between ‘shared intentionality’ and pragmatic processing. The next part, which is also the central point of my thesis, will examine how ‘shared intentionality’ accounts for pragmatic processing (such process is stipulated by the general rules observed and presented by the main pragmatics’ theories previously discussed).

IV. **Pragmatics viewed through the lens of shared intentionality**

After having examined the basics notions of pragmatics and shared intentionality, we now come to the central part of my thesis: the link between pragmatic processing and shared intentionality. The idea that human communication is inherently a joint act has been extensively studied by Herbert Clark in his book *Using Language* (1996). Should this argument prove true, then ‘shared intentionality’ must be the psychological infrastructure for communication, be it a joint act itself. This line of argument is also discussed in Tomasello’s work *The origins of communication*. However, Tomasello used ‘shared intentionality’ as a lens to look at communication from an evolutionary point of view, in search for the origins of human communication. In his work, pragmatics and its theories, as the functional heart of communication, were not specifically explored through the scope of ‘shared intentionality’. This is precisely where my interest lies, and my thesis is a quest in which pragmatics will be examined through the lens of shared intentionality: more specifically, I’m interested in the question “How does ‘shared intentionality’ account for the course of pragmatics processing?”
1. Shared intentionality in communicative acts

First of all I’d like to go through briefly the idea proposed by Clark (1996), which views communication as a joint act. In his book Using language, based on Grice’s notion of meaning (especially that of non-natural meaning), Clark interpreted two types of meanings: speaker’s meaning and signal meaning (Clark, 1996: 126). The two meanings are different but connected: “speakers mean something only by using signals, and signals mean something only because they are used by speakers to mean something” (Clark, 1996: 128). Clark used the following gestural communication as an example: a man and his wife were having lunch; the man then looked at his watch in order to remind his wife of an impending dentist appointment (Clark, 1996: 128). The gesture of ‘looking at the watch’ is the signal to convey speaker’s meaning, which in this case is the reminder of the dentist appointment. Based upon this distinction, Clark then came to the definition of a communicative act (which is, by itself, a joint act):

The joint act of one person signaling another and the second recognizing what the first meant.

(Clark, 1996: 130)

To use yet another example from Clark (1996: 131), this time using linguistic as means of communication: in a frame of a joint (communicative) act called r, A presents signal s to B (e.g., by uttering “Please sit down”), meaning that p (e.g., that he is to sit down). A expects B to do his part, that is to recognize what she means (p) by seeing that she is uttering “Please sit down”. Under pragmatic perspective, the leap from ‘perceiving’ a signal to ‘recognizing’ the speaker’s meaning is not however straightforward, and this is precisely the process of formulating a
speaker meaning (a matter which has been debated since Grice’s first proposal on ‘meaning’; Clark, 1996: 129). I would like to interpret Clark’s definition of communicative act in a more specific way as follows, incorporating ‘shared intentionality’ as its psychological infrastructure:
Figure 4: Shared intentionality framework in pragmatic processing (within a communicative joint act)

**Communicative act** (joint act)

**Shared intention**: speaker signaling so that hearer recognizes speaker’s meaning

**‘Shared intentionality’ features**
- Mutual commitment
- Mutual responsiveness
- Mutual support
- Mutual obligation

**Speaker A**

**Signal**

A’s intention regarding the ‘direction’ that B is to take to arrive at meaning (or to interpret A’s utterance)

**Hearer B**

**Meaning**

B recognizes A’s intention and takes such direction to arrive at A’s meaning

**CONTEXT & COMMON GROUND**
Under the proposed framework (visualized as in the diagram above), communication is a joint act, and the shared intention involves two components: the discharge of signaling from the speaker and the recognition of speaker’s meaning on the hearer’s side. By no means does this mean that the shared intention is made up of two separate, personal acts or ‘intentions’ of the speaker and hearer, respectively. Rather, it is a unified flow of communication: the two afore-mentioned components (speaker’s signaling and hearer’s recognition of meaning) are derivable from the shared intention. The ultimate joint goal is the hearer’s understanding of the speaker’s conveyed meaning. In the final frame containing the specific role of the agents (speaker and hearer) lies my proposed interpretation of Clark’s definition of joint communicative acts: there’s a certain direction in which the speaker’s meaning is to be taken, in order for it to be understood; the speaker, taking in the context and common ground, attempts to convey what he/she means by issuing a signal. In my view, such signal is used as a way to get the hearer recognize the direction in which the utterance is to be taken and interpreted.

The following example will serve to illustrate what I mean by ‘direction’:

You and I are sitting inside the house. Outside it starts to snow, and I then say to you “It’s cold outside”. One scenario is that my utterance is purely descriptive, and to share with you such description. Another scenario is that, previously, we have planned to go out. In this case, my utterance could be understood as a directive, to convey that ‘Let’s not go out’. (The different conveyed meanings in the scenarios obviously depend on the context and common ground). In the two cases, you arrive at my intended meaning in part because you recognize my intention regarding how you should take my utterance (the signal), i.e., as a descriptive or a directive. ‘How you should take my utterance’ is indeed the ‘direction’ that I want you to take
to arrive at my intended meaning. The speaker’s intention regarding the direction which the hearer is to take is not to be confused with the ‘shared intention’ of the communicative act as a whole. The boxes underneath the speaker and the hearer in the diagram (A’s intention regarding the direction, B recognizes etc.) are the means subserving the overarching shared intention of the communicative act.

However, in order for the joint communicative act to be jointly carried out (and for the ultimate joint goal to be reached), my proposal is that what is needed is the psychological infrastructure called ‘shared intentionality’. According to Tomasello, this psychological infrastructure are psychological processes (Tomasello, 2009: xiii) which involve the “social-cognitive skills for creating with others joint intentions and joint attention (and other forms of common conceptual ground)” (Tomasello, 2008: 12). These psychological processes are the crucial base on which a joint act is carried out. Shared intentionality and cooperation are two different notions, even though they are fundamentally related. Tomasello argues that ‘shared intentionality’ and its socio-cognitive skills evolved for the very purpose of human cooperation and cooperative activity (Tomasello, 2009: 54-55). Both play intrinsic role in joint acts; on the one hand, the ‘jointness’ already denotes ‘cooperativeness’, and it is indeed so for Bratman when he termed ‘shared cooperative activity’ in describing joint activity and the trio of features characteristic of shared cooperative activity (Bratman, 1992: 328). Shared intentionality, on the other hand, is what necessary for joint acts, at a psychological level. Take a communicative act: in order for two people to engage in a conversation using oral language, they must first and foremost be able to enunciate, and thus what is required (at this stage) occurs at physical, physiological, biological and cognitive levels in order for one to produce a string of sound
sequence for the said enunciation. At a psychological level, shared intentionality comes in as a framework on which communicative act (a joint act) leans on, and as a ratchet that propels the flow of the communicative act. It is indeed a psychological drive that pushes participants towards the characteristics and features that make up shared intentionality, in order to reach the ultimate goal of the joint communicative act.

Under the framework of ‘shared intentionality’, in the flow of a communicative joint act, A and B will do everything they can to guarantee that they each do their part to make sure that A’s signal (taking into account the context and mutual common ground) marks the ‘direction’ on how A’s meaning is to be taken, and that B (in her turn, also takes into account the context and mutual common ground) takes on the right ‘direction’ to arrive at A’s meaning. ‘Shared intentionality’ also imposes both agents’ awareness of their common ground, and ensure that their exchanges should remain well in the joint attentional frame. Interlocutors must also commit themselves to the communicative act. (Please note that the whole process is A and B’s shared intention, but the fact that B arrives at the correct intended meaning of A is their common goal. Whether or not the common goal is achieved (or at least not immediately at the first round of exchanging), the communicative act is still a joint act, as long as the agents have shared intention and all the other above-mentioned qualities.) I would also like to emphasize the crucial role that context and common ground play within the course of a conversation. Without them, people would be at a loss when they attempt to establish the ‘direction’ with which their utterance is to be taken.

More specifically, a conversation – an instance of a communicative joint act – is the fruit of two interlocutors ‘we intend’ to participate in it. It is absolutely different from two people
happen to say something that resembles a conversation without jointly communicating. For example, two women happen to be in two adjacent cubicles in a restroom, both talking on the phone. Imagine that what they say appears to sync (at least for a while), like one says “Hey, how are you?”, and the other says “I’m good, how are you?” The two utterances, on the surface, could be seen as a pair in a conversation, but this is utterly not a joint act, because before long what they say (on their phone, respectively), will veer off into different directions, without offending the other in any way whatsoever. The first utterance was not meant as the question for the other person in the other cubicle, nor was the answer vice versa. When you and I are to jointly have an exchange, then all the features of ‘shared intentionality’ apply. If I were to ask you “Hey, how are you?”, then you in return, being responsive to my part in the joint act, will reply accordingly by telling me how you are. The joint commitment would also mean that you could not just ignore my ‘signaling’ (in this case a question to request to know how you are) and offer a completely unrelated information such as “The watermelon is in season now.”, without a good a valid reason for doing so (e.g., by saying so, you mean you do not want to talk about how you are). Joint commitment also presupposes (mutual) intention and belief, that when I initiate the conversation with you, I do have the intention to do so, and believe that you would have the same intention to partake in the communicative act between us.

In a joint communicative act, we are also supposed to be mutually supportive: a very simple example is when I struggle to find a word to express myself, you would first of all notice that (mutually awareness and responsiveness), and then would jump in to help me. Ultimately this would also help you and us in carrying out the joint act, since helping me so that I can
express myself will make the direction I want you to understand what I mean more clear, and thus you can recognize the direction and ultimately the meaning of my utterance. During the conversation, the obligation and concurrence criterion also apply: if at some point you do not (or cannot) continue talking, you will seek my ‘approval’ for your opting out of our joint act, by offering some excuse such as “I’m sorry I can’t talk anymore because I have to go now”.

I’d like to emphasize that ‘shared intentionality’ is not the cognitive-psychological processes directly responsible in interpreting meaning (from a cognitive point of view); rather, it is the psychological frame that pushes agents towards behaviors that facilitate the stream of communication (the speaker signaling and the hearer recognizing the direction and meaning), so that ultimately the participators could reach the joint goal (that the hearer reaches the correct intended meaning). To illustrate this point, I’d like to present the following metaphor: imagine you invite me over for dinner; since we both like eggs, you decide to make omelet for us. Even if you have all the ingredients (eggs and oil and salt etc.), you still need fire (to provide heat) to make the egg omelet. Imagine that on that day I don’t feel like an egg omelet, but scrambled egg, and thus you make scrambled egg instead. The fire is an intrinsic component that helps make the egg dishes (be it omelet or scrambled egg), but the fire itself isn’t directly responsible for the ultimate outcome of the type of dishes for dinner. Similarly, within a communicative act, the ultimate dish is speaker’s meaning, and shared intentionality is parallel to the fire which helps interlocutors reach the goal of the communication (which is that the hearer understands the meaning of the speaker’s utterance), without it being directly responsible in forming, decoding or clarifying the speaker’s meaning.
Even though the characteristics of shared intentionality (mutual responsiveness, mutual support, joint commitment and obligation) are expressed seemingly as a conscious process, I would argue that this psychological frame operates at the subconscious level. Since the cooperative nature of human being is inherent and innate (Tomasello, 2009: XIII), thus shared intentionality, which has evolved to subserve human cooperative activity, must also be innately built in. This built-in mechanism is the scheme that drives us towards all the characteristic behaviors listed above. Because of this, in a joint act, we are responsive to each other not because that prior to executing the act, we explicitly agree to be responsive, or that we tell ourselves “We have to be responsive to the other, remember that!”. We don’t have to remind ourselves of that simply because it’s an inherent drive already built in, and such mutual responsiveness is implicitly understood and shared between us. The same goes for the other characteristics. This innate quality could be illustrated in the simplest example of communication: a complete stranger in the street turns to you and asks you for the time; you would naturally tell him/her the time if you could, which is due to natural, innate helpful and cooperative tendency. But on a communicative level, the fact that you reply at all to someone you don’t know, that you in turn are committed to the conversation and act your part, is all due to shared intentionality that comes built-in inside you.

This doesn’t mean that misunderstandings never happen. I would argue that, in case of misunderstandings, the communicative act is not to be taken as a failed joint act, or not as a joint act at all. It is still considered rightly so if all the parties do their part. Mey argued that a speaker’s meaning is never a matter of ambiguity, or in his own words, for a pragmatician, that what is meant is ambiguous is “glorious nonsense” (Mey, 1993: 7-8). He then proposed that it is
the “dynamic development” (and not just the context) of the conversation that guides our understanding (Mey, 1993: 9). In the cases of unachieved goal of a correct understanding on the hearer’s side, I would venture that the reason for it to occur is the mismatch of direction from both sides. The mismatch of direction may be caused indirectly by a mismatch in (assumption of) mutual common ground. Let’s take a look at the following example (adapted from Mey, 1993: 8-9):

You and I are in a part of town which is in neither’s own neighborhood, but I have been before, so I think I know the way.

(29) Me: Do you know the way back to the city center? We can go in my car.

(30) You: Ok!

While driving back, you however keep giving me directions, which irritates me since I initially thought that I needed to guide you, not the other way around. I therefore speed up so that you don’t get a chance to interfere, after which you say:

(31) You: Oh, I thought you didn’t know the way back.

(32) Me: I thought you didn’t know!

(whereupon we both start laughing).

In (29), I, knowing the way back already, meant it as a real question, since I genuinely wanted to know if you knew the way back or not, hence the offer to ‘go in my car’ (to take you back there). You, on the other hand, interpreted (29) not as a real question, but as an indirect request for direction. This (temporary) misunderstanding made me confused for a moment, since I didn’t understand your reaction of giving me direction if you didn’t know the way. Such
confusion was cleared up in (31) and (32). I would interpret the misunderstanding and whole situation as following: there was a mismatch in the assumption of mutual common ground, which led to a mismatch in direction of how the meaning of (29) is to be taken. I knew the way and at the same time assumed that you might not, and thus meant (29) to be taken as a real question. Vice versa, you knew the way and perhaps assumed that I didn’t, took (29) as an indirect request. Your reply in (30) didn’t really help either, since it’s only a partial reply (to the second half of (29) but not to my question in the first half). This mismatch in (assumption of) common ground (which is manifested in (31) and (32)) led to the mismatch in direction of the interpretation of (29). You and I however are still committed to our joint act, and thus, after seeing that, after the first round of exchange, you didn’t arrive at my intended meaning (which has never been ambiguous in the first place), we both made effort to clear up the confusion (by making reference to our own assumption in (31) and (32)).

There’s another interesting example from Clark (1996: 131), which ran as follows:

Ann and Ben are in a room; Ann wants Ben to sit down. Ann assumes that Ben knows Dutch and says “Gaje even...” when Ben interrupts with “What?” before she can finish “zitten alsjeblieft.” According to Clark, Ann is forced to abort the intention (to ask him to sit down) when she realizes that “Ben isn’t doing his part”. In my opinion, we have two scenarios here. Scenario 1 is that Ben does know Dutch, but pretends that he doesn’t by replying “What?”. In this scenario, the conversation is no longer a joint act, since Ben indeed doesn’t do his part in acknowledging Ann’s intention by her uttering (in Dutch), even though he could understand it. However, this interpretation is quite unlikely, since (1) Ann only assumes that Ben knows Dutch, and (2), people have a natural tendency to be cooperative. This leads to scenario 2, where Ben
indeed doesn’t speak Dutch. By replying “What?” to Ann’s half utterance, he in turns signals that he doesn’t understand it. In a normal conversational situation, it would be reasonable to imagine the follow-up conversation between them which runs as follows:

(33) Ann: Oh, sorry, I thought you speak Dutch!
(34) Ben: It’s ok. So what did you want to say?

If Clark meant this example as in scenario 2, then it’s not that Ben isn’t doing his part (if by ‘doing his part’, Clark meant Ben’s part of recognizing and acknowledging Ann’s intention). How is Ben supposed to ‘do his part’ if he doesn’t understand Dutch in the first place? Again, in scenario 2, it’s a mismatch in assumption in common ground that led to the unachieved goal (at least in the first round of exchange).

The aim of this section is to introduce the basic idea of how shared intentionality might work within communicative acts. In the following sections, I will present an in-depth analysis of this framework and its working mechanism with regards to major pragmatic theories (Austin and Searle’s Speech act theory, Grice’s Cooperative principle), as well as how it works in view of Clark’s notion of joint communicative acts,

2. **Shared intentionality within Austin and Searle’s Speech act theory**

In this section, Speech act theory will be analyzed in order to reveal the point where shared intentionality intersects with this theory.

As presented in II.2.i, when introducing ‘Speech act theory’, Austin distinguished three types of acts within an utterance: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary act. At locutionary level, the ‘act of saying’ according to Austin is:
..in the full normal sense to do something – which includes the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with a certain ‘meaning’ in the favourite philosophical sense of that word, i.e. with a certain sense and with a certain reference.

(Austin, 1975: 94)

The ‘sense’ and ‘reference’ at this level is purely concerned with decoding the speaker’s utterance at grammatical and semantic level. With illocutionary act, on the other hand, we are concerned with the ways we use speech; in Austin’s words:

For there are very numerous functions of or ways in which we use speech, and it makes a great difference to our act in some sense ... – in which way and which sense we were on this occasion ‘using’ it.

(Austin, 1975: 99, emphasis in original)

The sense in which we use speech (illocutionary act) and the sense and reference of saying such and such (locutionary act) are different. When uttering “It’s cold”, one could – utilizing this same utterance (same locutionary act) – use it in different ways, or in other words, perform different illocutionary acts (in other words, same sense and reference at locutionary level but different senses at illocutionary level). One could use it to perform an act of giving information (that it’s cold), or another act of making a request (that the hearer closes the windows) etc.

In attempting to differentiate illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, Austin proposed the following formulas:
‘In saying \( x \) I was doing \( y \)’ or ‘I did \( y \)’

‘By saying \( x \) I did \( y \)’ or ‘I was doing \( y \)’

(Austin, 1975: 122, emphasis in original)

The first formula denotes an illocutionary act, while the second a perlocutionary act. For example:

(35) In saying the storm is coming I was warning her.

(36) By saying the storm is coming I alerted her.

Within a communicative act, I would argue that it is the illocutionary act that corresponds with the ultimate goal of the joint act, which is that the hearer understands the speaker’s intended meaning, which in this case is the illocutionary act that the speaker wants to perform. The sense in which we use speech (at illocutionary level), in turns, correlates with the direction with which the speaker’s utterance is to be taken. This point is illustrated in the following scheme:

Figure 5: Shared intentionality within Speech act theory

- **Utterance**
- **Locutionary act** (the sense and reference in saying)
- **Illocutionary act** (the sense in which we use language)
- **Perlocutionary act** (‘consequential effects’ invoked in the audience, or the intention or purpose of the speaker by saying such and such)

Shared intentionality Guides the hearer to follow the direction (or the sense in which we use language) to understand the speaker’s illocutionary act (the intended meaning)
Here’s another example to illustrate the leading role of the illocutionary act in a communicative joint act as opposed to that of the perlocutionary act.

(37) Don’t go there.

Two possible illocutionary acts of (37) could be that of begging and threatening. The consequential perlocutionary acts would be ‘persuading’ and ‘intimidating’, respectively. However, when trying to clarify the intended meaning of (37), the hearer would inquire about the illocutionary acts (38) and not the perlocutionary acts (39):

(38) Are you begging me, or are you threatening me?

And not:

(39) Are you persuading me, or are you intimidating me?

As Austin pointed out (Austin, 1975: 126), (39) would be ‘absurd in a perlocutionary sense’, since the one who utters that question should be the one that answers it.

The ultimate, shared goal of a communicative act is very well illustrated by Austin himself when he discussed the more rudimentary felicity conditions for a ‘happy’ functioning of a performative:

It is obviously necessary that to have promised I must normally

(A) have been heard by someone, perhaps the promise;

(B) have been understood by him a promising.

(Austin, 1975: 22, emphasis in original)
Regarding communication as a communicative act, condition (A) is quintessential in the sense that it acknowledges both the speaker and the hearer in the communicative process/act. Condition (B) represents the ultimate, shared goal of a communicative act: that the hearer understands the speaker’s intended meaning (the illocution). Thus, (B) provides further proof for the fact that illocutionary act represents the goal of a communicative act.

The fact that, when the speaker utters such and such as a speech act, the hearer follows the direction and sense to actually reach the intended meaning (the illocutionary act) without merely stopping at understanding only the locutionary act is a proof that there’s a mechanism working behind that, which serves to push the hearer to reach the ultimate meaning. Such mechanism might very well be the proposed shared intentionality.

Again, within the framework of speech act theory, the ‘shared goal’ of a joint communicative act is to have the hearer recognize the illocutionary act, that is, the direction which the hearer has to take in order to understand which act the speaker attempts to perform. This is especially apparent in the case of indirect speech acts.

As presented in II.2.ii, according to Searle’s classification of speech acts, an ‘indirect speech act’ is an act whereby the primary illocutionary act of the utterance is different than the secondary, literal act. Take the example of an indirect request (in which the primary illocutionary act is that of a directive while the utterance contains, on the surface, a secondary, literal act). The shared goal in this case is that the hearer recognizes the primary illocutionary act (a directive). In order to do that, the speaker could use a highly conventionalized way of making a request, by way of asking a question, thus signals to the hearer the ‘direction’ to interpret the first’s utterance. Again, when using the conventionalized way, the speaker didn’t
just hope that the hearer could take the cue, but instead knew that the hearer would try everything do his/her part (that is, to understand the direction of the utterance). Both speaker and hearer rely on the common ground (i.e., convention, knowing that other will do the same thing), that there’s a high chance that such and such conventionalized way might indicate a request. The context in which a communicative act occurs also plays an important role, but what’s more important is that both agents make themselves aware of the context and determined to rely on it. Let’s take a look again at example (21) “Could you reach the water jug?” In one scenario where the water jug is within reach of the hearer, (21) would be interpreted as an indirect request, whereas in another scenario, if the water jug is out of reach of the hearer, (21) might be interpreted as a question (about hearer’s capability to reach it). If the water jug is out of reach of the hearer, and furthermore within reach of the speaker, (21) could also be further interpreted as an offer as to pass it (to the hearer). Hypothetically speaking, in the case of an indirect request (or indirect speech acts in general), an extremely cooperative speaker (in a joint act of communication) might begin every utterance with the following “The next utterance I’m going to say will be meant as a request!” (or whatever illocutionary act it primarily performs). Such communicative behavior might come across as really absurd. It could get even more absurd (and perhaps also comical) when, while trying to threat someone, one says (and meant it sincerely, and not ironically) “The next utterance I’m going to say will be meant as a threat!”

Unfortunately this is not the way natural language works in real life, and in order to get the message across, both agents have to rely on the fact that they are in a joint act together,
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and will be committed to the joint goal to get the hearer ‘go with the right direction’ (however indirect or implicit such direction might be).

3. **Shared intentionality within Grice’s Cooperative principle**

Regarding Grice’s Cooperative principle, the ‘direction’ within the proposed shared intentionality framework is not to be confused with the ‘direction’ that Grice mentioned in his Cooperative principle:

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(Grice, 1975: 26)

In Grice’s Cooperative Principle, the ‘direction’ of the talk exchange is the overall and overarching direction of the entire exchange, whereas the ‘direction’ in the proposed shared intentionality framework is the direction with which the speaker’s utterance meaning is to be taken. Within the framework of shared intentionality as illustrated in Figure 4, Grice’s Cooperative Principle and the subsequent Maxims lie in the common ground level. The Principle and the Maxims are the norms and general rules that people adhere to. It is often taken for granted that people follow norms, but what is needed is the psychological underpinning serving as the driving force towards the adherence of these norms, and that psychological underpinning is shared intentionality. In a communicative act, shared intentionality serves as an implicit ‘tap in the shoulder’, with which the speaker signals to the hearer that ‘this is the direction to take my utterance in order to understand it’. The ‘shared
intention’ within a communicative act makes it not just the sum of two people doing their part of the joint act: speaker A does not just throw out a random utterance and leaves hearer B to interpret the utterance whichever way B wants, since that violates the very spirit that ‘shared intentionality’ engenders. In fact, when speaker A adheres to (or violates) the maxim of quality, A does so in the belief that B would be responsive and aware of A’s direction, and thus would take it and arrive at the intended meaning. The reason B is capable at recognizing such direction is because the Cooperative Principle and the Maxims are in their common ground.

When discussing utterance, meaning and intention, Grice proposed:

“A meant, something by x is (roughly) equivalent to “A intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention”

(Grice, 1991: 220, emphasis in original)

Originally Grice aimed to stress the speaker’s intention in making an utterance, since “the recognition is intended by A to play its part in inducing the belief”, meaning by that, A “assumes that there is some chance that it will in fact play this part”, that he doesn’t take it for granted that the effect will be induced in the audience ‘whether or not the intention behind the utterance is recognized’ (Grice, 1991: 219). However, his proposal presupposes the hearer’s role within the communicative act, i.e., the hearer’s recognition of the speaker’s intention (again in this case, the speaker’s intention is the direction within the communicative framework, with which the hearer to follow to reach the intended meaning). A question remains: what propels the speaker to start a communicative act carrying such and such intention, and ultimately what motivates the hearer to recognize such and such intention? I
would argue that it is shared intentionality that is responsible for this whole process. It is *mutual responsiveness* that drives the hearer to be aware of and recognize the speaker’s intention. It is *mutual commitment* and the consequential *mutual obligation* that make the interlocutors do everything they can (according to the general rules indicated in Grice’s Cooperative principle and maxims) so that the hearer reach the speaker’s intended meaning (implicature). The ‘concurrence criterion’ as stipulated by Gilbert also manifests itself in Grice’s words when he compared a talk exchange to ‘cooperative transactions’:

> There is some sort of understanding (which may be explicit but which is often tacit) that, other things being equal, the transaction should continue in appropriate style unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate. You do not just shove off or start doing something else.

(Grice, 1989: 29).

It is shared intentionality that accounts for the successful outcome of any ‘cooperative transaction’, in this case, a joint communicative act. The fact that the features of shared intentionality may come across as too ‘obvious’, that one may think that *of course* interlocutors would be committed to carrying out a conversation, or that it’s *taken for granted* that the hearer could grasp the ultimate intended meaning, could be another proof that shared intentionality operates at a *subconscious* level. Within Grice’s Cooperative principle theory, shared intentionality is the fire, and the maxims are the recipe, both of which help the speaker make a dish and the hearer receive it (in this case the intended meaning is the dish, or the ultimate goal). Shared intentionality and the Cooperative principle and the maxims work side by side in pragmatic processing.
4. **Shared intentionality within Clark’s communicative joint act**

As introduced in section III, the proposal that shared intentionality is the psychological framework for communicative act is based on two theories: the first one is Clark’s consideration of communicative act as a joint act; the second comes from the philosophy of action’s idea that shared intentionality plays an intrinsic part in joint acts. In this section I would like to trace back to Clark’s theory of communicative act as joint act, in order to understand the role shared intentionality plays within a communicative act. When decomposing the components and processes of communicative acts (and joint actions in general), Clark identified that:

> What makes an action a joint one, ultimately, is the coordination of individual actions by two or more people.

(Clarke, 1996: 59)

The first question that arises would naturally be “Why should people coordinate?” The reason is that they do so in order to solve coordination problems. This line of reasoning comes from Schelling (1960: 57) when he studied situations in which two people’s actions shared the same interests or goals, and their actions are interdependent. In such situation, these people are said to have a coordination problem. The key to solve these problems is what Clark called ‘coordination device’ (Clark, 1996: 64). Common ground gives the participants a focal point which guides them to form expectation of each other’s participatory actions in the joint act, from which coordination arises. In other words, the coordination devices provide “a rationale, a basis, to believe they and their partners will converge on the same joint action” (Clark, 1996: 65). Clark claimed that it is mutual expectations (provided by coordination devices) that
facilitate participants to perform a joint action (Clark, 1996: 66). To sum it up, according to Clark, joint action is born out of coordination, or more precisely, when partners try to solve coordination problems by means of coordination devices. Coordination problems in turn arise out of the fact that people share common goal. Now I would argue that, common goal is not the ultimate source out of which joint action is born, since in order for two or more people to share a common goal, they must first share intention. In a way, (shared) common goal presupposes shared intention. And this is where shared intentionality plays it part within this whole scheme. The following diagram (with specific focus on communicative act, an instance of joint action) would help to visualize the process of such scheme:

Figure 6: Shared intentionality within Clark’s framework of communicative joint act
Within this scheme, I would argue that it is shared intentionality that provides the psychological push to participants to coordinate and to seek solution to coordination problems. In the search for solution (coordination devices), shared intentionality is also the driving force that motivates interlocutors to seek the focal point within their common ground/situation in order to converge their participatory actions towards the common goal. This focal point helps guide the hearer to the ‘direction’ with which he/she could reach the speaker’s intended meaning. At the same time, the focal point also gives interlocutors ‘mutual expectation’ of each other’s actions within the joint act. Recall that such mutual expectation makes up an inherent part of shared intentionality.

Within the joint action itself, Clark claimed that joint actions are made up of ‘participatory actions’, which are actions of the individual ‘each doing their parts’ (Clark, 1996: 60). Clark further distinguished ‘participatory actions’ from ‘autonomous actions’, which on the surface might appear identical (recall the example of two people talking simultaneously on the phone in adjacent bathroom cubicles). What sets them apart, he claimed, is the ‘intentions’ behind them. In order for one agent to do his part in a joint act, he must intend to do so, and at the same time believes that he has such intentions (commitment), and that B has the parallel intentions and beliefs (mutual belief). In other words, one agent does what he does only due to the belief that the other will do her part (Clark, 1996: 61). These features described by Clark are obviously those belonging to shared intentionality.

Clark further identified four levels within a communicative act, which he termed ‘a ladder of joint actions’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Speaker A’s actions</th>
<th>Addressee B’s actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Within this ladder of joint actions, I would argue that shared intentionality occurs at the first three levels. At level 1, shared intentionality is the reason for which B attends to A’s behavior (speaking with B). Similarly, at level 2, shared intentionality prompts B to identify A’s signal, and at level 3, to recognize such signal (and consequently to follow the signal’s direction to ultimately reach A’s intended meaning). In the same manner, on A’s part, shared intentionality motivates A to execute the behavior, to present signal and finally to signal to B, certainly due to the belief that B will do his part in the joint act. At the end of level 3, when B recognizes A’s signal and reach A’s intended meaning, thus the common goal of the joint communicative act is reached. Level 4 presented by Clark, in my view, belongs to another layer, which is the extra-linguistic goal of a joint activity (a joint project in Clark’s terms). At this level, ‘a proposal is expected to be followed by its uptake’ (Clark, 1996: 150).

Take the following exchange as example: I want you to sit down by telling you “Please sit down”. At level 1, I articulate the utterance to you, and you in turn attend to my behavior by paying attention to what I just said. By saying that, I thus present a signal to you, which you identify as an utterance composed of “please”, “sit”, “down” (level 2). By presenting such signal, at level 3, I signal that I’m asking you to sit down, and you would recognize my signal (my
phrase) as an invitation, or request, for you to sit down. At this point, the ultimate goal of the communicative act, which is the fact that you understand my intended meaning, is attained. At level 4, you considering whether or not to take up my proposal (that you sit down) is beyond the range of the communicative act (this denotes cooperation at a different level, within a larger activity – my attempt to get you to sit down. Clark called this a joint project, another type of joint action, within which the communicative act is enclosed). Within speech act theory, I would argue that level 1 and 2 correspond with locutionary act, while level 3 correlates with illocutionary act and level 4 with perlocutionary act – the effect on the audience corresponds (the uptake on an act). (This point further confirms that perlocutionary act resides beyond the goal of a communicative act (it could very well be the goal of another joint act that envelops the communicative act in within)). All in all, in order for the common goal of a joint communicative act to be reached (level 3), shared intentionality is the driving force behind, motivating the speaker and hearer to initiate and move up on the action ladder of the joint act.

All in all, regarding pragmatic processing, the proposed ‘shared intentionality’ framework is not meant as a better mechanism to explain such process compared to the classical pragmatic theories; rather, the proposal is that this framework works side by side with Clark’s communicative act, Grice’s Cooperative Principle and Austin and Searle’s Speech act theory. It aims to explain how pragmatic processing occurs within the general rules of communication: shared intentionality subserving as the psychological underpinning is what’s necessary to get the interlocutors reach the ultimate shared goal of communicative acts, which is to grasp the correct intended meaning. In order for that to happen, shared intentionality is the driving force behind all the cooperative effort and actions from both interlocutors, so that
the *direction* to take the speaker’s utterance is made clear. Again, such direction works within the boundary of the general communicative rules stipulated by the main pragmatic theories.

V. Conclusion

Pragmatic processing has always been an interesting topic in the realm of pragmatics in particular, and in communication in general. Communication viewed as a joint act provides the first starting foundation for my thesis proposal; the second one being the notion of ‘shared intentionality’ within the field of philosophy of action. The central proposal is then the meeting point between the field of pragmatics and that of an ‘outsider’: the framework of ‘shared intentionality’ as the psychological infrastructure for pragmatic processing. In this proposition, the role of the speaker has gained equal weight as that of the hearer in the process of explicating the implicit, conveyed meaning of an utterance: both interlocutors are mutually and equally responsible in such process, from which mutual commitment, support, and obligation are derived.

Another point which I mentioned earlier is the fact that, the existing theories and the proposed ‘shared intentionality’ framework are neither mutually exclusive nor incompatible. My attempt with the proposal is only to look at pragmatic processing from another perspective. As previously discussed, shared intentionality works side by side with the pragmatic theories in pragmatic processing, serving as the psychological framework that motivates both interlocutors to aid the hearer to reach the speaker’s intended meaning. It would be interesting to see how an empirical study could be designed in order to determine the validity and applicability of the proposed framework. However, at a theoretical level, I hope that the proposal (or the points and debates put forth) could provide intriguing perspectives on the process of extricating
implied meaning, a process which would ultimately provide the key to understanding human communication.
Reference


