

LEEDS

DIALOGICALITY

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Background:

At this conference on co-creating communication, I would like to start by bringing to attention one aspect of communication that we often do not speak about. A human being can be a cure for another human being by offering hand, attention, concern or communication. With this in mind, I would like, at the very beginning, to remind ourselves two things.

First, while communication is an essential feature of humanity, we must not forget that it is more than mutual understanding and exchange of messages. It is also an activity through which every human expresses his or her agency. I wish therefore to emphasise that although we are focusing on communication, we must bear in mind the person as a whole. I would like to make this clear during my talk today.

My second point is that our focus is on interaction rather than simply on the individual.

In this talk I shall do three things. First, I shall speak about the roots of dialogicality and about dialogicality as a concept in communication. Second, I shall speak about four main features of dialogicality in communication. And finally, I shall raise some questions concerning implications of dialogicality for professional practice.

The dialogical approach, about which I shall be talking, does not start with the individual's cognition and with behaviour or single entities (individuals, groups) but with social interaction among human minds. But what does interaction mean exactly? It can be argued that the concept of interaction has been used in all sciences for a long time. The concept of interaction is loaded with a range of different meanings, from statistical interaction to

interactions in phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, to mention but a few. But not every kind of these interactions is relevant to dialogicality. I shall now mention some kinds of interaction that are relevant and that will lead us to dialogicality.

a) Roots of dialogicality: interaction, mutuality, attunement

Without denying individuality, let us presuppose that humans are born with the capacity for interaction with others. This is the perspective that has been presupposed by some significant human and social scientists during the last century like Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, Lev Vygotsky and Bakhtin's Circle, among many others. More recently, during the second half of the twentieth century and today, these ideas were inspirational in research and professional work concerned with mutuality, reciprocity and attunement to the attunement of the other in communication and in social developmental studies. Equally, we find these ideas in ethnographic research, conversation and discourse analysis, and in anthropology and various fields in sociology and social psychology.

According to the perspective of the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918), the self-other(s) interaction plays an essential role in the process of socialisation, communication and thinking. The interaction between the self-others starts with trust, 'one of the most important synthetic forces within society' (Simmel, 1950, p. 318), central to psychosocial feelings and to the formation of social knowledge. Trust is a feeling that is immediately apprehended and therefore, it is not always conscious. Simmel views trust both as situated within - as well as outside - the boundaries of knowledge that individuals can form of one another. Without trust society could hardly become established, and instead, it would run a considerable risk of falling into pieces.

If we turn to social developmental psychology, we find numerous ideas that corroborate those of Simmel. In social developmental psychology, researchers,

including James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934), George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) have proposed theories of self-consciousness that is built on the mutual interaction of the self-others.

James Mark Baldwin viewed the process of the mutual interaction between the Ego-Alter through give-and-take relationships in which ‘the self meets self, so to speak’ (Baldwin, 1895, p. 342). He postulated a theory according to which the self is originally crude, unreflective and largely organic, and it is through interpersonal interaction that it becomes ‘purified and clarified’. He expressed this perspective, for example, in his studies of imitation, which were part of his theory of the self: ‘My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself’ (Baldwin, 1897, p. 15). Imitation for Baldwin, however, was not a passive process, but it always involved the creation and an idiosyncratic interpretation of the other person. The concept of imitation is important in communication of the deaf-blind person, as Paul Hart has brought to attention. Imitation in this respect as well as the fact that imitation is not just a passive process but that it involves invention – we could talk about inventive imitation.

George Herbert Mead's analysis of the interaction between the self and others was based on his presupposition that the self has an ability has a capacity to view oneself in a way others see oneself. In other words, the self becomes an object to itself: it regards itself through the eyes of others (Mead, 1934/1967). Mead (1927) develops the idea, which includes all environmental conditions around the self. Environmental conditions, he insists, exist only for concrete human agents who use them in their own idiosyncratic ways. Human agents, on their part, are never imprisoned in their own little cages but are orientated towards others and their perspectives.

Vygotsky's (1979, p. 29) analysis of self-consciousness, again, is based on the interaction between the Ego and the Alter. For him, ‘[t]he mechanism of knowing oneself (self-awareness) and the mechanism for knowing others are one and the

same'. Consciousness of speaking and of social experience both emerge simultaneously and together with one another. According to Vygotsky, there is no difference between the fact that one can repeat one's own word and that of the other person. This capacity grows for self- and other-communication simultaneously.

The idea of interaction between the self and others was also fundamental in the Neo-Kantian philosophy of dialogism in the early part of the twentieth century. This school was represented by scholars like Buber, Rosenstock, Rosenzweig and Cassirer, among others. In this philosophy, dialogism was based on the idea of the 'dialogical principle'. By 'dialogical principle' neo-Kantians meant the relationship between 'I' and 'you' (or 'I' and 'Thou'), that is, the relation of co-authors in communication. The dialogical principle, the neo-Kantians argued, is established and maintained through speech and communication. Communication expresses the life experience of people, their emotions, concerns and their construction of social reality.

These ideas became soon influential not only in Germany but they also spread to Russia. At that time, a number of philosophers and scholars actively pursued ideas of dialogism, and among them was the literary critic Michail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and his Circle, which included scholars like Voloshinov and Medvedevⁱ.

Bakhtin expressed the concept of interaction between the Ego-Alter above all in terms of the communicative self- and other-consciousness. Just like for Mead (1934/1967), so for Bakhtin this meant that the self could become conscious of him- or herself only by being aware of others: 'The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a *thou*)....The very being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion*. *To be* means *to communicate* ... *To be* means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.287). These particular ideas of Bakhtin are very close to those of Martin

Buber, whose work Bakhtin knew very well.

Among the members of Bakhtin's Circle it was Voloshinov (1929/1973) who systematically pursued the idea of the Ego-Alter interaction in language and speech. One of his main argument was that a word is always directed outside, towards someone else; as a two-sided act, it is a bridge cast between speaker and listener: 'If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee' (Voloshinov, 1929/1973, p. 86). A word is never the speaker's only; it is territory shared by the interlocutors. Thus we see that the concept of interaction presupposes for Voloshinov sharing perspectives as well as struggling for one's own position. It is here that we already find the germ of the distinction between intersubjectivity and search for recognition that I shall discuss later. Most importantly, words and symbols are never neutral signs. Neutrality can be only artificially imposed but daily speech is always judgemental, evaluative and orientated to co-creating new meanings.

This fundamental facet of communication is being consistently explored by Anne Nafstad and her colleagues in developing new perspectives on diagnostic communication with deaf and blind persons. Since words and gestures are always doubly orientated, i.e. towards the self and towards the other, they are always open to different interpretations and in this sense they are ambivalent. This is particularly challenging in communication with people who have communication disabilities and specifically in people who are deaf and/or blind.

This discussion shows that interaction, dialogue and language is not something *between* individuals or groups of people but something that *creates* people. In other words, language is not an instrument of communication or a 'kit' or 'tool kit' as has been argued by some researchers, who have interpreted Vygotsky's ideas in this sense (to my mind wrongly).

It was the French linguist Benveniste, who, in the nineteen sixties, challenged this view of language. Benveniste argued that language reproduces social

reality; the use of language is based on the polarity between the I and you, and the role of the third person in the discourse, and symbols and naming. Above all, for Benveniste (1966/1971) the symbolizing and representative capacity of humans is the basis for abstraction as well as for creative imagination. In arguing against the image of language as the instrument of communication Benveniste (1966/71, p.224) says:

All the characteristics of language, its immaterial nature, its symbolic functioning, its articulated arrangement, the fact that it has *content*, are in themselves enough to render suspect this comparison of language to an instrument, which tends to dissociate the property of language from man.

Dialogicality as ontology

While the ideas on interaction of classics like Simmel, Mead, Baldwin, Vygotsky, Bakhtin – we could mention many others – are very important for the concept of dialogicality, dialogicality is more than that. While relying heavily on Bakhtin’s dialogism, I am using the term ‘dialogicality’ to characterise the fundamental *capacity* of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of others (Marková, 2003). Thus, what dialogicality adds to the concept of interaction, to my mind is that it is such a basic condition of human existence that we can talk about it as *ontology*, i.e. the existence, of the human mind. This is also why we can say that a human being is – or has a potential to be – a cure for another human being. Taking just one example, Erikson (1968, p.82) argues that the starting point of the Ego-Alter interdependence is a sense of ‘primary or ontological trust’ or ‘the ontological source of faith and hope’. For him, ‘basic trust’ is the first mark of mental life of a baby; it is openness towards others, and it exists prior to any feelings of autonomy and initiative. Trust develops through ‘unmistakable communication’ and equally, basic distrust signifies the failure in balancing and integrating the child’s experiences with others. Just like the self develops through otherness, so

learning to trust the other means learning to trust oneself; and in turn, Erikson claims, trusting oneself implies trusting the trust of the other. Trust therefore is vital for, and is transmitted by, communication.

Moreover, dialogicality has a number of further specific characteristics that go beyond the concept of interaction, and I shall discuss four of them. These are: Ego/Alter interaction, Ego/Alter/Object, dialogicality as intersubjectivity and as a search for recognition, heterogeneity in dialogue and the third parties.

a) Ego/Alter interaction

I have already characterised ‘dialogicality’ as the fundamental *capacity* of the human mind to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of others – and this is what I call Ego/Alter interaction. Who is the Ego and who is the Alter? I am intentionally using them as abstract terms because in a mundane dialogue these two terms can be substituted by any concrete partners. The interacting components define one another as complements, whether this involves institutions vis-à-vis environment, institutions vis-à-vis groups, one group vis-à-vis another group, one individual vis-à-vis another individual - or to put it more generally - the *Ego* and the *Alter*.

Let us take even a closer look at this concept. Each individual is born, as an individual in physical and biological sense, with his/her own body and brain, and with capacities for intellectual, emotional, and linguistic development. But the human individual is also born with a social sense, that is, with openness towards others. It is this social – or dialogical – capacity, to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of others that enables the development of thinking, speaking, language, knowledge, reflexivity and of the self. It is in this sense that the Ego and the Alter (the Ego-Alter) co-constitute one another in a dynamic figure-ground set-up, both transforming in and through dialogical communication and multifaceted symbolic interactions.

b) Ego/Alter/Object

If we adopt this ontology, i.e. if the Ego and Alter define one another as complements, this also determines their relation to an object of knowledge. This issue concerns the question as to how we learn to know objects around us – and therefore, this is also important in communication with deaf/blind people.

Briefly, it is not the individual alone – of Ego-Object who cognizes an object but we have here a basic triangularity *Ego-Alter-Object*. We co-construct objects together, whether as I and you, or I in culture, or a group with another group. In other words, in knowing we are never alone. Without going into any details at this stage, this triangularity, the Ego-Alter and the Object has been, I want to remind that this triangular concept has been used in studies and professional practices involving learning an object in communication with the deaf/blind. Here again we have an emphasis on co-creating object. In sum, the implication of this position is that from the *Ego-Alter ontology* we postulate the *Ego-Alter-Object theory of social knowledge*. In this case it is a dialogical triad – or better of embedded dialogical triads - that is the dynamic unit of the theory of social knowledge.

I can give examples of this triadic interdependence from communication with people with cerebral palsy. Communication, whether it involves persons without or with a communication problem, is always about something, about some kind of an object, whether it is a cup, or a ball or the self. The object is negotiated and constructed jointly by the ego and the alter. Consider, the following example from our research with people with cerebral palsy:

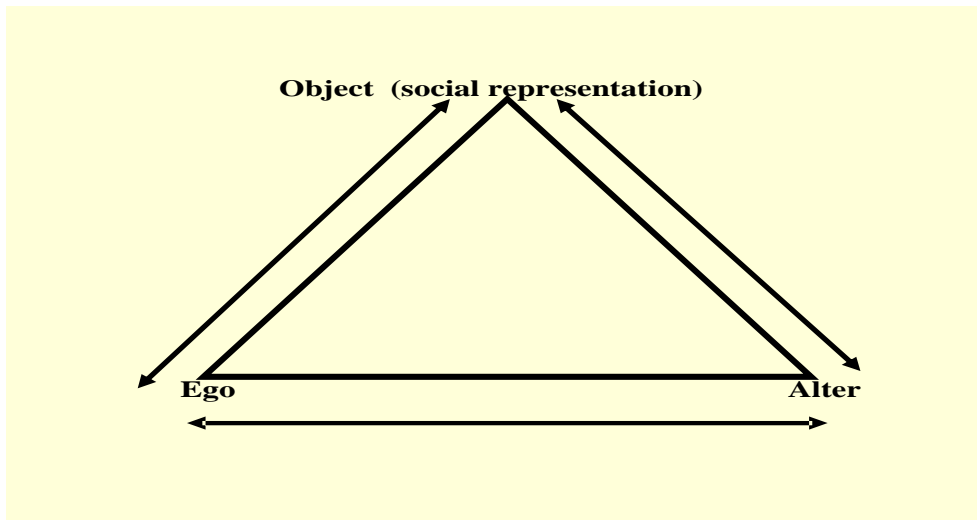


Figure 1

c) Dialogicality as intersubjectivity and as a search for recognition

There are two basic modes of dialogicality: the search for intersubjectivity and the struggle to establish oneself as an agent. These two modes are in interaction and often one mode changes into the other. It is important that professionals concerned with people who have speech and communication problems these two are kept in balance.

The first mode, the search for intersubjectivity, could be characterized as a tendency towards a unification of the Ego with the Alter, i.e. the struggle for mutuality and for the attunement to attunement of the other. Studies of dialogue usually focus on intersubjectivity. This is understandable. The idea of basic or ontogenetic forms of trust or intersubjectivity dominates communication in child development as well as communication of the deaf and blind person. Both the Ego and the Alter seek visibility and recognition by one another, each actualizing their potentials through interaction and communication: they understand and create meanings of their world in and through communication with others. The work of Martin Buber and of his followers (e.g. Friedman) emphasise this aspect of dialogicality.

However, the focus on intersubjectivity may disguise the fact that each individual, whether disabled or not, is also an agent who has desire to establish him/herself as such. In other words, it may be important to study not only the negotiation of meaning but the individual's struggle to impose his or her own meaning: we need to focus also on the search for self-recognition and agency. Indeed, the negotiation of meaning may be hiding something deeper: the attempt to establish oneself as an agent and to manifest one's self. Therefore, it may be useful to distinguish between the expression of agency and the negotiation of communicative intentions and meanings.

It is the desire for being socially recognized that is another basic tendency of the self being directed towards others. Through social recognition, human history can be conceived as a history of desired desires (Kojève, 1969, p.9). This is why quite insignificant physical objects, e.g. a piece of paper or metal, can become symbols of social recognition. Once they acquire symbolic value, they turn themselves into desires that humans wish to obtain: they now carry the meaning of social recognition. And so we see how the symbolic social reality is created. The strife for social recognition is not a peaceful process but takes place in and through tension and negotiation of goals between the self and others. And if this strife is not successful and the self is deprived of the feeling of social recognition, it also means that the self is unable to satisfactorily function with respect to things which matter to humans. These things will obviously be different for people who do not have obvious communication problems, for example, they may include partaking in democratic decisions or having the feeling of justice; people with disabilities will have other priorities, for example, make themselves understood.

The two tendencies in the Ego-Alter interaction discussed above express themselves in dialogical situations as a tendency towards symmetry and asymmetry. Let us explain. The phrase 'to be in dialogue', whether used in daily speech, in the media or in politics, usually means having 'a good dialogue'. 'A

good dialogue' generally refers to a communication, e.g. discussion or a conversation, in which the participants maximize their effort to establish intersubjective understanding, to diminish conflict and to increase symmetry in exchanges and in reciprocal relations. In contrast to this meaning, in dialogicality 'to be in dialogue' refers to a much broader perspective. While they do not exclude features of 'a good dialogue', dialogicality is characterised also by the struggle between partners in a dialogue.

Dialogical relations are not engaged solely in search for intersubjectivity and a peaceful contemplation. Instead, cognitions and affects are in tension; they clash, judge and evaluate one another. Bakhtin (1981, p.314) foregrounds dialogue as a strife of divergent perspectives: 'one point of view is opposed to another, one evaluation opposed to another...this dialogic tension...permits authorial intentions to be realised' in heterogeneity of languages and of ideas. Understanding, precisely because it is active, is always evaluative.

There is yet another point to Bakhtin's ideas of dialogical asymmetries and tension. Dialogical interaction also involves an effort to understand and surmount the unknown positions of other participants and their strangeness. We do this, Bakhtin argued, by appropriating thoughts and speech of others. This is why the strangeness of others' thoughts and speech facilitates communication. A stranger is someone who is like us and yet different than us. Strangeness between the dialoguing cognitions is tied up with a constant negotiation of tension. Tension is ever present, whether participants strive for intersubjectivity, for dominance, for overcoming strangeness of one another or for dialogical mutualities of any kind. Even if participants in dialogue are in a close intersubjective relation and share a great deal of knowledge, it is tension that keeps their dialogue going.

You both mention, Anne and Paul, Buber's concept of the relation 'I-you' and 'I-it'. This is important. We need to recognize that communication is always asymmetric. One participant always dominates – perhaps temporarily - either in

terms of knowledge or status or even in terms of the capacity for communication. Thus, there is always a possibility that one partner may be treated as 'it' – if the other, through negotiation of meaning, argumentation of through other means of power does not give the other enough possibility to express him/herself as an agent. I would even say that the search for intersubjectivity, if negotiation of meaning is directed by the more powerful partner, could lead to the 'I-it' relation, if the other partner, in our case usually a person with communication disadvantage, is not given chance to express him/herself as an agent.

Of course, these two aspects, intersubjectivity and the search for recognition, are likely to interact with one another and we as professionals should be aware that both are important in dialogical communication.

Let us consider an example, in which the person with cerebral palsy imposes his own meaning on the carer, thus expressing his agency while the carer may not quite understand what is going on.

Studies in 'difficult communication', i.e. communication between people with highly unequal communication resources, often reveal dialogical features, which would not be observed in unproblematic communication. These features include, for example, subtle attention to gestures, anticipation of the next contribution or responsiveness to minute communicative interactions in dialogue.

In such situations, consistency and innovation in imposing meaning is essential for the person with a speech problem in getting the message across. In 'difficult communication', the interactional impact of any communication resource employed in action is dependent not only on the impaired speaker conveying it as integral to interaction, but, also, on the unimpaired speaker seeing it as such. Moreover, no kind of communication resource employed by the impaired speaker can be considered as a discrete and isolated unit. Rather,

each exists in a complementary relationship with other resources, as well as part of the total interactional environment.

A person, who has physical difficulty to voice words, uses any means available as a communication resource, thus opposing the image of language as a system of ready-made signs.

The participants of the dialogue below are Guy and Mary. Guy has a severe cerebral palsy and is in a wheelchair. He cannot talk and he uses an electronic communication system, which he operates by typing letters or words and the system can voice them. That morning Guy and other students in the college were writing letters to inform their families that they would be going out to dinner to an Italian Restaurant Maggios and to bowling. These two events were to take place the same day. Bowling is an important sport activity for people with cerebral palsy because they exercise their muscles to prevent atrophy.

At the start of the conversation Mary asked Guy what he was doing that morning. Guy tried to explain that they were writing those letters to their families. In making his response to Mary, he used communication resources that were available to him, ranging from body movements to signing, typing single letters or single words. Here is the extract:

Extract 3: What are you doing here today

Guy	Mary
// \uparrow M smiling	\downarrow Talker \uparrow G
	well (.) // what are you
	doing (here) today (.) hmm=
= looks over his right shoulder	\downarrow Talker \uparrow G
presses keys	
//points and looks over at papers	(.)
on table	//,,follows point,,looks
	over at papers
withdraws point	
	(\uparrow G) \downarrow Talker

<p>//moves finger to press keys</p> <p>,,, presses keys</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I live at</p> <p><i>gaze on papers</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>points over at papers</i></p> <p>65 Longbenton Avenue York</p> <p><i>gaze on papers ...</i></p>	<p>what is it what's going on today// (.) hmm</p> <p><i>follows gaze holds gaze on paper</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">,,, ↑G</p> <p>yes I know you do but wha- (.)</p> <p><i>leans over G's chair</i></p> <p><i>mm>what are you telling me that</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">↓<i>paper, points at paper</i></p> <p>for< oh because of this:</p> <p>address <u>here</u> (.)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">↑<i>and round at G</i></p>
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The conversation goes on for several minutes. Mary clearly does not understand that by typing ‘I live at 65 Longbenton Avenue York’, Guy is giving answer to her question as to what he was doing that morning. From Guy’s point of view, pressing a button, which speaks his address, can be considered an efficient communication resource that is available to him. He pursues consistently with his response because Mary does not understand. He also looks round over his shoulder, gazes at papers and letters they were writing, which Mary views as being nosey, rather than interpreting his gaze as an answer to her question. Thus, rather than taking his looking around as a *communicative gesture* attempting to draw her attention to relevant objects, she interprets this as a *behaviour*, i.e. as ‘being nosey’. Guy clearly expresses his ideas in dialogue by all communicative resources available to him but they are not taken as such by Mary.

As the dialogue continues, Guy presses, on his computer the word ‘bowl’. Mary misunderstands because she interprets ‘bowl’ literally as a container and asks him whether he needs a bowl. Guy vocalizes and mimes the action of bowling. At this stage she also disregards his gesture miming the action of

bowling. This gesture Guy uses repetitively from now on during the conversation.

Extract 4: Bowling

Guy

Mary

↓*Talker, pressing keys*
bowl

pressing keys
bowl

gesturing

nodding

//*pulling at M's sleeve*
pressing keys

pointing to himself
((vocalisation))

a bow:l (.) a bowl

>or is it the < other kind of
bowl >is it< bowling

nodding
ye:es uh //right ((*laughing*))

is it ten pin bowling

In this extract Guy is systematic, building on what has been interactively achieved to help Mary to take his perspective. Finally, he is successful. Guy builds on this understanding, repeating again 'bowl' and gesturing a bowling action. Inventiveness of Guy and the difficulty of Mary clash because she takes his behaviour and communication in a literary sense. Answerability or responsibility in this dialogue is fully the matter between the two participants. While they use resources publicly available, the participants need to be able to synchronize their meanings and transmit the content of the message.

The above extracts show that the attempt to synchronize meanings proceeds through two dialogical paths, first, attunement to the attunement of the other and second, imposing own meanings on the other. Their contrastive features are necessarily foregrounded in dependence on intention and motives for

communication as well as on the nature of events of which the communication is part.

SHOW EXTRACT

This extract draws attention to several issues in difficult communication. These issues can be present in any kind of communication but we may not notice them because dialogue is usually much faster than the one I have just showed you and, in addition quick repairs may hide any incurring difficulty. In this extract we see at least the following issues:

a) *The difficulty for the carer to distinguish between behaviour and communication*

She relies on clues that she knows: looking behind Guy's shoulder means being nosy, rather than trying to communicate something;

b) *There is the joint construction of an object*

We have two objects here: it is the dinner in Maggios; and it is bowling

c) *Guy persists with his message that Mary does not understand*

He presses again and again on the button giving the address – because this is his response that Mary does not understand – he shows himself as an agent. It is important here that Mary tries hard to understand what he is telling her, but she does not dismiss his responses as meaningless; we can see here a balance between attempts to establish intersubjectivity and to give each partner the possibility to express his/herself as agent. We also see interplay of smiles and expressive actions celebrating the successful construction of an object.

Persistence in behavioural style is the main strategy that minority groups use in their attempt to persuade the majority about their case. We can see the same happening here. And we have, in our research, many other examples showing the importance of construction the object.

All these issues –and surely some others – exist in any kind of communication. They are even more difficult in communication with deafblind persons and in the discussion we might like to focus of these difficulties.

d) Heterogeneity and ‘the third party’

The interaction between the *Ego* and *Alter* is never solely an exchange of words and gestures here-and-now, that is, in a dialogue involving co-present participants. It always involves third parties who are not present, e.g. the ‘third person’, ‘virtual others’, ‘other others’ like friends, peers, institutions, or the ‘positionings’ (we can say taking roles) of the self with respect to physically or symbolically co-present ‘others’. The participants take their positions or roles; they also use social norms, whether ethical, moral or aesthetic. All this contributes to the heterogeneity and multifaceted nature of interactions.

Bakhtin insisted on showing how the speakers’ dialogues are filled with ideas of others who are not physically present, with their commitments and loyalties; speakers confront opinions and worldviews of others. The speaker creates links to others’ communications, anticipating their responses, reactions and feelings. This leads Bakhtin (1979/1986) to introduce the idea of ‘the third party’ in the context of understanding. He maintains that ‘a *third* party in the dialogue’ is not to be taken in an arithmetical sense but in a sense of a symbolic participation – there of course can be more than three participants involved. The author and the addressee can have dialogue only they presuppose a third, a higher super-addressee, whether God, science, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history and so on. In other words, each ‘dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue (partners) (Bakhtin, 1979/1986, p. 126). The third party however involves more than a reference to shared knowledge. It is actually the organizer of topics, of ideas and even of positions from which dialogical exchanges are established.

These distant voices actually become part of the process of speech production: not only does the speaker anticipate his addressee’s response, but

their individual utterances are actually ‘aware of and mutually reflect one another’ (Bakhtin, 1986, p.91). In other words, human have the creative capacity to assimilate voices of others and to rework utterances from disparate places and times (Bakhtin refers to this as a ‘distant dialogicality’).

George Herbert Mead and Sigmund Freud introduced the terms like the ‘generalised other’ and the ‘superego’, respectively. Although the underlying concepts of these terms are theoretically different, they both function as a societal ‘super-addressee’ sanctioning and reprimanding individuals who dissent from socially imposed norms. They are part of individuals’ consciousness (e.g. ‘the people’, science, tradition), unconscious (e.g. Freud’s superego) or conscience (e.g. Mead’s ‘the generalised other’). In addition to the here-and-now, every communication has roots in the past, as well as is orientated towards the future. Anticipations of future judgements and evaluations of an unknown third party, too, play a communicative role.

In communication with deaf/blind people there is yet another meaning of the third party. The role of the third party can be taken by a professional or another person with disabilities who acts, so to speak, as a witness or an interpreter. It is someone who sometimes understands better than the participants themselves what they are trying to say. We can say that this person guides the communication on which the other two participants are dependent.

I think it depends how we conceptualise the third party. If we conceptualise it as a reference to past experience, to absent others, to moral and ethical requirements of communication, certainly these aspects are important. Moreover, every communication situation imposes some constraints by evoking socio-cultural demands. It takes place in a certain culture, which can be either very local or it can be broadly based and characterised by rules, habits, norms or traditions. These rules, etc. may be firmly established in society; they are part of common sense knowledge and often function implicitly under the level of consciousness. It seems to me that it is here that the idea of ‘third parties’ in

here-and-now exchanges may become useful. For example, people, whether with or without communication problem learn very early in life that once we enter communication, we have moral or ethical commitments. For example, people are given chance to express their position; that there are suitable moments for interruption; that people take turns and so on. I can show an example of this in communication with a person with cerebral palsy. Do we want to refer to these moral and ethical rules as ‘the third party’? There might be good reasons for that but it could be also seen as an unnecessary multiplication of terms.

e) challenges for practice

a) *intersubjectivity and the search for social recognition and agency*

Are these two modes of dialogicality in contradiction? Are both equally important? Do we impose I-it relation on communication in our good attempts to achieve intersubjectivity?

b) *What challenges brings the notion of the ‘third party’ into communication with deaf/blind persons? If the concept of ‘third parties’ makes sense, in what sense? If not, why not?*

c) *can dialogicality help us to identify intentional gestures or arbitrary movements?*

But at the same time, we need to remind ourselves that the human being must be considered in its wholeness – they are agents. What humans have become and what their prospects are for the future – all that is due to the capacity of dialogicality.

ⁱ Bakhtin and his Circle were all familiar with the work of German neo-Kantians. Moreover, in the nineteen twenties both Leningrad and Moscow enjoyed a great deal of literary and linguistic activities that flourished in newly established institutes, e.g. in the Institute of the

Living Word, the State Institute for Discursive Culture and the Institute for Comparative Literature and New Languages, among many others. However, the Soviet regime made the end of this significant work by the early nineteen thirties. It abolished the institutes and suppressed the activities associated with this work; many scholars were imprisoned, sent to labour camps and many were executed. This persecution included Michail Bakhtin and his Circle. As a result, dialogism was silenced until the time of political defreezing in the post-Stalinist era. Bakhtin's work came again to the light in the nineteen sixties, when his book on Rabelais (1984b) was published, after many obstacles, in the Soviet Union. Following this publication, other works of Bakhtin appeared and re-appeared and so his work was 'rediscovered'. It commenced its forceful path not only in the Soviet Union but above all in the European and American scholarship during the later part of the twentieth century.