

Understanding dialogue: Language use and social interaction

Keynote lecture

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Outline

I present a theory of dialogue as a form of cooperative joint activity. Dialogue is treated as a system involving two interlocutors and a shared workspace that contains their contributions and relevant non-linguistic context. The interlocutors construct shared plans and use them to “post” contributions to the workspace, to comprehend joint contributions, and to distribute control of the dialogue between them.

A fundamental part of this process is to simulate their partner’s contributions and to use it to predict the upcoming state of the shared workspace. As a consequence, they align their linguistic representations and their representations of the situation and of the “games” underlying successful communication. The shared workspace is a highly limited resource, and the interlocutors use their aligned representations to say just enough and to speak in good time.

I end by applying the account beyond the "minimal dyad" to augmented dialogue, multi party dialogue, and monologue.

This talk represents joint work with Simon Garrod and is based on our new book

Pickering, M.J., Garrod, S. 2021. [Understanding dialogue: Language use and social interaction](#). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.