Extending Dialogism

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This lecture will account for the background of a proposal to extend the limits of dialogical theory to encompass new ground (Linell, 2009, 2017).

There are basically two types of theoretical conceptualisations of dialogue, which we, for the sake of simplicity, may call dialogue theories and dialogical theories (or dialogism). Dialogue theories focus entirely on external (observable, social, usually spoken) dialogue, i.e., situated encounters through verbal interaction or other semiotic resources in which two or more human beings make sense together. These encounters may alternatively involve, in addition to a human sense-maker, a "higher animal" or an advanced technical system (e.g., a computational system) that can be assigned agency and some sense-making ability. Dialogical theories are more comprehensive than dialogue theories; they introduce an explanatory dimension by the assumption that human beings possess dialogicality which is an ability of an individual (human being) to develop and practice sense-/meaning-making together with others. The other can be a present other, a peripheral or absent individual or group, or a generalised other (a culture, possessing a language and some other sets of norms.

I will argue that the notion of dialogue must be further extended, by not only transcending the limitation to external dialogue, but also extending "classical dialogism" (i.e., Bakhtin-like theorisations, which primarily involved dialogical text analyses), with its focus on dialogicality (usually focused on social language use), into a broader theoretical framework, which also encompasses indirect interdependences with others in activities that are usually individual on the surface, e.g. in thinking, spontaneous silent sense-making, and perception of the environment. I will briefly discuss three major activity domains, namely, solo thinking (conceived as "inner dialogue"), perception of the environment, and reading. I will summarise the foundation of extended dialogism in 14 points. I will then take up some thoughts on dialogue in relation to perceptual activities.

References

Per Linell. 2009. *Rethinking Language, Mind and World Dialogically: Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making*. Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC.

Per Linell. 2017. Dialogue, dialogicality and interactivity: A conceptually bewildering field? *Language and Dialogue*, 7(3):301–335.