

Review of IADA 2004 Chicago

Lawrence N. Berlin, Ph.D.

At a recent workshop of the International Association for Dialogue Analysis held in Chicago, “Theoretical Approaches to Dialogue Analysis,” scholars from 16 countries gathered at the organization’s first event ever held in North America. The event was hosted by Dr. Lawrence N. Berlin of Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. Over the course of 4 days, 36 papers were presented that spanned the breadth and depth of the field, as well as combining more traditional approaches with innovative, interdisciplinary ones.

For the opening plenary, Dr. Edda Weigand of the University of Münster posed a question about “The End of Certainty in Dialogue Analysis,” providing a backdrop for open inquiry and debate which were to epitomize the workshop. Beginning with the Theory of Dialogic Action Games (Weigand), other plenary speakers served to anchor various strands drawing on the traditions and perspectives to the study of dialogue. Dr. Anita Fetzer of the University of Lüneberg continued the call to pursue interdisciplinary perspectives in “Validity Claims in Context: Monologue Meets Dialogue,” drawing on her expertise in Speech Act and Inference Theory and combining it with the theory of Habermas.

In a call for not abandoning more traditional linguistic approaches, Dr. Franz Hundsnurscher of the University of Münster presented his own theory of Dialogue Grammar. Thus, making a plea for linguists to focus on their area of expertise—the language—he demonstrated a generative model serving as the basis for an explanation of the construction of dialogue. Another plenary utilized a traditional linguistic analysis coupled with the advantages of technology. Dr. Karin Aijmer of the University of Gothenburg made use of her extensive work in corpus linguistics to demonstrate its benefits for distinguishing cross-linguistic meanings as they emerge in verbal interaction across parallel corpora of authentic speech.

In his plenary, Dr. Talbot Taylor of the College of William and Mary presented a talk which brought about a shift in the workshop from a more quantitative perspective to a more qualitative one. In “Dialogue Constructing Dialogue Developmental and Epistemological Considerations,” Taylor asked everyone to consider the contextual aspects of dialogue that relate to metadiscursive talk and their impact on children’s communicational development.

Dr. Douglas Macbeth of the Ohio State University called upon participants of the workshop to look beyond theory, suggesting alternate ways of examining dialogue could be equally rich and valuable. His talk, “Sequential Analysis in an Ethnomethodological Key: Order without Theory,” explored the foundations of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis as they contribute to a fuller understanding of dialogue and its contexts. Also following in these traditions, Dr. Hervé Varenne of the Teachers College of Columbia University used EM and CA to explore “deep play” in the conversations between patients and healthcare workers around the use of painkillers.

Finally, Dr. Lawrence N. Berlin of Northeastern Illinois University presented an explanation of Grounded Theory in “Grounded Theory and its Benefits for Dialogue Analysis: ‘The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship’.” In this plenary, he used the script of the famed movie *Casablanca* to demonstrate how Grounded Theory can be productive in providing both descriptive and explanatory power in a mixed approach to dialogue analysis.

Apart from the plenary sessions, several noteworthy presentations were given that added to the overall quality of the workshop and further solidified the various theoretical strands. Among these were papers on a functional dialogic model of verbal interaction by Dr. Christian Hudelot, speech acts on group work in school settings by Dr. Jean-Paul Roux and Dr. Mireille Froment, a socio-semiotic approach to dialogue theory by Dr. Ernest Hess-Lüttich, and a multi-modal discourse analysis of humor by Dr. Richard Hallett and Dr. Judith Kaplan-Weinger. The full program can be accessed at <http://www.neiu.edu/~iada2004> and abstracts for individual presentations may be requested by contacting iada2004@neiu.edu.