Chapter 4
Discourse reflexivity in multi-party interaction

As we engage in ordinary conversations, we perform a complex linguistic and interactional task with our interlocutors. We contribute to our accumulating shared experience while maintaining interaction, alternate in speaker and hearer roles in rapid succession, often overlapping but not too much, take and concede the floor, relate our turns to those of others – in short, we generate meaning and interaction as joint activity. We excel at coordinating our actions in complex ways verbally, paralinguistically, and non-verbally. All means verbal and non-verbal are undoubtedly involved in the self-regulated, coordinated activity of co-constructing meaning and interaction in all spoken interaction, but their relative importance varies in different situations and during conversations, so that sometimes we rely more heavily on verbal and sometimes nonverbal cues. Paralinguistic cues accompany all verbalisation.

Academic discussions would seem to locate themselves at the verbal-heavy end of the scale. They also tend towards more institutional regulation than everyday conversations: as discussed in the previous chapter, academic discussions range from the formal and highly regulated, like meetings or doctoral defences, to more self-regulated graduate seminar or study group discussions. Yet even the most informal kinds like students' teamwork are based on pre-set goals and usually (certainly in the ELFA corpus) organise themselves by for example selecting a chairperson to help them keep focused on the task. This sets the discussions clearly apart from self-regulation in everyday conversation, where habits, norms, and conventions set the frame, and even these are open to negotiation.

In these circumscribed academic circumstances, one might imagine that discourse reflexivity is not greatly needed, because discussions progress in a predetermined fashion. Particularly at the formal end of the scale, specially appointed persons invested with the authority to utter certain stipulated speech acts regulate the discussion. Nevertheless, we already have evidence that metadiscourse is used in academic speaking, although we know very little about how this manifests itself in different types of speech events, and how social parameters like the formality of the occasion might influence its usage.

While we may thus assume that discourse reflexivity is, at least to some degree, used in discussions within academia, it would also seem likely that it is put to new uses beyond those established in research on monologues. A silent audience facing a monologic presenter has been replaced by a group of fellow participants, who have their own interests and agendas, and who may turn the discussion to unexpected directions.

4.1 Reflexivity in dialogic discourse

Let us start the exploration into dialogues with an example. Extract (4.1) comes from a conference discussion section. The session is attended by 39 conference participants, one of whom (S11) has given the final talk in a longer session on the same topic, with alternating presentations and discussions. At this point five people take an active part in the discussion, one of whom (S18) is the chair. The passage has been shortened by removing a good deal of such content that is presumed to be uninteresting to the readers of this book and irrelevant to reflexive discourse. The same practice is applied throughout in the examples.

(4.1) <S32> *can i ask* <S34> sure </S34> so do do you see there some some fundamental difference between these undevelopment countries and development countries because i i *i could ask the same question* of of the use of the mold- mobile phone of my own children <S11> mhm-hm </S11> is is there they're really used and what is the [benefits] <S11> [mhm-hm] </S11> and do they have the understanding and skills to use the real benefits of the of the mobile phone so so what is the fund- what is the fundamental <S11> mhm </S11> difference here and why it is ethical question </S32>
<S11> er *we could say* that er that the difference exists . . . not beneficial i'm *i'm not saying* that that people have to be prudent . . . and we can afford to allocate them whatever i *i agree* that there's there's also problem . . . </S11>
<S18> okay and then <NAME 31> *had a comment or a question make it short please* 'cause there's couple of others </S18>
<S13> *okay i'll be very brief* er i mean <NAME S31> go ahead </S13>
<S31> yeah <S18> yeah </S18> erm *i think* **this connected with to your question also** er *let's keep talking on* mo- about mobile phones er erm i think every technology all all technologies have the those er bad side effects <S11> mhm-hm </S11> and er you *you spoke about* er how to react to . . . </S31>
<S11> . . . so that's *that's what i mean* that we have to look at all the sides of these issues </S11>
<S31> er actually i was maybe a bit kind of worried that er that usually in in these kind of projects er people just accept the bad sides but don't do anything [about them] </S31>
<S11> [yeah] yeah yeah and that's a ethical problem that's that's something i take for granted and *that's why er what i talked about* in terms of costs of these projects </S11>
<S13> *i in fact go largely with* <NAME S11>*'s* <COUGH> *position* <COUGH> because . . . </S13>

The passage begins by S32 prefacing a question with discourse reflexive *can I ask,* to which S34 responds 'sure'. The exchange looks like something we hear at conferences all the time, but it is not quite like that, because S34 is neither the chairperson nor the presenter. But just before the extract begins, S34 had asked a question from the previous presenter (S11), so S32's apparent intention is to enquire whether S34 had finished, and S34's response suggests this is how he understood the question. In this brief exchange, the two speakers are *managing the situation* between them.

S32 then proceeds to his question and turns his attention to the presenter (S11), who acknowledges his role as the addressee by repeated back-channelling. S32 asks two things: (a) whether there's a difference between two scenarios, and (b) why this should be an ethical issue. Metadiscourse comes at the beginning of giving his reason for the question (*because I could ask the same question*). S11 starts by a discourse reflexive preface (*we could say*). A little later he addresses the second question, prefacing it with reflexivity again (*I'm not saying . . .*) and finally making a concession to S32's point (*I agree that . . .*). In this exchange, the speakers use discourse reflexivity to *manage the discourse*. Both apparently refer to their own speech, but in effect they are responding to each other – S32 to S11's talk, S11 to S32's question.

After S11 has finished his response, the chairperson (S18) takes over situation management and gives the floor to S31. There is a brief confusion when another speaker first takes the floor but immediately concedes it to S31 (*okay I'll be very brief er I mean <NAME S31> go ahead*), thus continuing to negotiate the situation. S31 first contextualises his question in relation to the previous one (*I think this connected with to your question also)*, then to his intended topic (***let's keep talking about** mobile phones*), and finally to S11's presentation (*you spoke about*). All his reflexive metadiscourse in this turn manages the discourse. S11 continues to work towards a convergent position like he did in his previous answer, indicating with metadiscoursal inserts that he is on the same side with S31 (*that's what I mean*; *that's why er what I talked about . . .*).

At this point S13 deems the floor to be his without overtly consulting the chairperson (there may of course have been eye contact or nods to the same effect) and joins the discussion by positioning himself in it (*I in fact go largely with <NAME S11>'s position*) before even embarking on his own comment.

We can see in the comments, questions, and responses an ongoing *negotiation* of positions as well as the contingencies of the situation. It would seem, like in this case, that the underlying strand in these negotiations is to expand everyone's grasp of the issues by enhancing mutual understanding. This will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 6. Example 4.1 is part of a long discussion, and it is worth pointing out that at the point where our extract ends, its centre moves on to revolve around S13's comment, away from the presentation. The relationship between the

duration of a discussion and its tendency to become self-regulating is elaborated below (Section 4.2.2). We also see in this extract how reflexive metadiscourse is employed to refer to speakers' own discourse (*I'm not saying*) as well as that of their interlocutors (*this connected with your question*), together with the future, i.e. the speaker's intentions (*I'll be very brief*) and the past, i.e. what has already been said in the discourse (*you spoke about*).

In brief, this extract illustrates how discourse reflexivity is woven into social interaction. It helps attune interlocutors to each other, whether they want to agree, argue, explore, or perhaps engage in power struggles. The principal means of dealing with these tasks can be divided into *contextualising* upcoming speech at the present state of the discourse and *negotiating* arguments and positions. This chapter is concerned with contextualising, and Chapter 5 will continue the same theme in written dialogues. Negotiation is the central topic in Chapter 6.

This chapter is, then, at the most general level, about contextualising utterances with reflexive metadiscourse. By contextualising I mean making explicit how the utterance relates on the one hand to the discourse ('managing discourse') and on the other to the speech situation ('managing situation'). Discourse reflexivity thus captures both kinds of context that Firth (1968) postulated: the context of text (co-text), and the context of situation. I will discuss both below, starting from managing discourse (Section 4.2), which is the major domain of reflexive metadiscourse in the present data, and managing situation will follow in Section 4.3. The analyses in this chapter are quite data-driven, and therefore may look more protracted and detailed than those in the subsequent chapters. They nevertheless lay the foundation for the chapters that follow.

4.2 Managing discourse

Multi-party discussions require complex activity simultaneously and in quick alternation. Speaker-hearer collaboration involves simultaneous processing from participating individuals (Pickering & Garrod 2021) and is crucially entwined with co-constructing interaction (Hari et al 2015). In essence, interacting individuals need to attend to the 'substance' of the discussion as well as the interaction and share in the joint construction of both simultaneously. Correspondingly, discourse reflexivity straddles both levels.

To start disentangling the complexities of multi-party discussion, let us begin with the two principal levels that participants must manage in dialogic interaction: the more linguistic facet of *managing the discourse*, and the more action-oriented *managing the situation*. In a comparatively regulated, substantially verbal activity like academic discussion, much management is concerned with the verbal aspects –

prefacing turns, specifying addressees, or referring to preceding discourse, while other managing activities relate to the 'outer' movement of the situation – opening and closing episodes, allocating turns, moving to new stages. We will attend to both in turn, starting with discourse management and returning to situation management next (Section 4.3).

Speakers in multi-party interaction (mostly discussed as *dialogic* interaction here) spend an appreciable amount of time and effort in relating their speech to the state of the discourse at hand. This can be conceptualised as the *contextualising* function of reflexive discourse: connecting the present state of the discourse to where the current speaker is taking it. Contextualising essentially implies 'fitting in', making the upcoming discourse relevant to the moment of speaking, and showing this with reflexive metadiscourse. This takes place in two principal ways: either by *orienting*, indicating the function and character of what is going to be said next, or by *retrieving*, adopting something in the preceding discourse up to the moment of speaking and making it relevant to the present. The more recently updated and the more obvious the continuity is, the less explicit indication of the relevance of the next contribution to the present stage should be necessary.

4.2.1 Orienting

Orienting discourse reflexivity sets the scene, suggesting how the current speaker means their upcoming speech to be taken (*just a comment*), or not to be taken (*this is not criticism*). It can indicate how the discourse continues (*well maybe I should add*) or challenges the present state (*does it then make sense at all to talk about . . .*). Such acts steer the hearers' predictive processing, that is, generating hypotheses about which way the discourse is moving. Much of processing consists in confirming hypotheses – or discarding them, in which case we must update our situation models (e.g., Radvansky & Zacks 2014). Discourse reflexivity may support fluent hypothesis formation and serve to maintain apposite situation models.

Looking ahead
Discourse reflexivity of the orienting kind sustains interactants' efforts to adjust their situation models to each other. It builds on the speaker's express intentions, which for many is the prototypical case of metadiscourse: helping others anticipate what the speaker is likely to say next. For the speaker, orienting discourse reflexivity confers opportunities of sharing their thinking as well as manoeuvring the discourse towards their purposes. A typical case would simply be indicating the function of the upcoming speech act (*I just like to make a brief comment on*

this). Many such instances are quite similar in monologic and dialogic discourse, and therefore likely to be familiar from the bulk of metadiscourse research. Below, some of the expressions (4.3–4.5) could perhaps equally well occur in an academic presentation, while others (like 4.2) show signs of people thinking on their feet rather than delivering a prepared talk.

(4.2) <S9> w- w- well i thi- i think if *if we talk about* knowledge mhm power in various ways is also linked with this thinking . . .

The speaker here names the topic she is going to elaborate. Although the example is from a dialogue, in principle the metadiscoursal expression itself could occur in a presentation. Yet in a presentation we might be more likely to give it a generic interpretation, even see it as a delexicalized statement (Chapter 2, section 2.7), but in its dialogic context the interpretation is more concrete ('since we are talking about . . .') – they are indeed talking about knowledge in this discussion.

Alerting others about the speaker's intention of expressing their stand on an issue (4.3) is also familiar from much metadiscourse research. It is not unusual for such discourse reflexivity, in this case itself tentative, to be accompanied by mitigating hedges (*at least in my thoughts*) in *discourse collocation* (cf. Mauranen 2001, 2003).

(4.3) <S3> er well basically i think that almost everything is tied to EU nowadays and all the peoples are just talking about European identity and things like that but *i would also say* that at least in my thoughts people can still feel that they . . .

Even though metadiscourse is usually seen as facilitating the listener's or reader's job, an act of helpful recipient design on the part of the speaker or writer (see, Chapter 2, section 2.5), there is also a competitive side to it: it is a way of imposing the current speaker's interpretation on the discourse (Mauranen 2001). As the speaker indicates how their speech is to be taken, their viewpoint assumes more space, while the hearers' scope of interpretation narrows down. Reflexivity reinforces the speaker's perspective on the discourse by directing it towards a given perception to the exclusion of others. Consequently, it takes more effort from listeners to contest the suggested viewpoint or the status of the locution. Imposing an individual's order on the discourse is an act of power, even dominance. Discourse reflexivity thus advances not only cooperation but also competition.

Speakers can likewise use discourse reflexivity for tactical purposes, such as shelving matters they will *not* be talking about (4.4) but mentioning them all the same. This is a way of simultaneously saying something and as it were not saying

it. Writers have other possibilities for such tactics, in the form of notes for example, or parentheses, while speakers can alter their pitch or loudness or, like here, by using laughter for marking digressive remarks.

(4.4)   . . . large countries somehow (which create) problems what well *i don't want to go @into it* i i@ there's no activity on Mediterranean countries . . .

Another tactical deployment of reflexive discourse is seen in (4.5), where the speaker offers his interlocutors the interpretation that his argument has persuaded them. His turn has been very long, and the comment is made in a jocular manner, which elicits laughter from other participants in recognition of the reference. Ad hoc humour is eminently interactional and quite common in academic discussions, frequently resulting in collective laughter.

(4.5)   . . . okay <SIGH> i think *i should stop* there <SS> @@ </SS> but of course you can see *from what i'm saying* democracy <WHISPERING> hierarchy we've created hierarchies </WHISPERING> how can you have democracy with hierarchies

A relatively common tactic for speakers to reassure their interlocutors that what they will be saying next is not going to take much time (4.6). This might be considered a politeness strategy. Such comments may also notify listeners or readers that the issue is not very important or that it is a digression. In this context *shortly* seems primarily to indicate an intention to speak briefly:

(4.6)   <S2> mhm . sh- *shortly* nunavut has created both cause of these problems, er er but it doesn't really . . .

Some kinds of anticipatory reflexive metadiscourse characterise only dialogic speech, a case in point being self-commentaries on speaker's ongoing thought processes (4.7), as if explanatory digressions while thinking aloud.

(4.7)   more and more people acquiring that knowledge, i'm just *i'm just trying to, er try trying to sort of find a language for talking about these things* s- many that s- the we start talking of this body of knowledge and how it grows

Underlying complexities may be embedded in situations even when the action would seem quite straightforward, as in the extract below (4.8). The speaker names a speech act (*I have a suggestion),* which would naturally direct others to hear the next utterance as a suggestion. What happens here, however, is a longish delay between the

reflexive framing of the turn and the actual suggestion made (underlined). The suggestion, when it comes, consists of a possible solution to a problem under discussion. Before the speaker comes to the suggestion, he goes through several preliminary phases, indicating problems with alternative paths along the way. The articulation of the suggestion is further delayed by typical speech features such as false starts, either left in the air (*now er of course you might not get er it's; a gram-negative cell would be supporting that er assembly process er that you but*) or repaired (*the chances that you know that there's a small chance that; and it but it makes bam-35*). However, going through these preliminary steps does not seem to detract from listeners' willingness to wait till the predicted suggestion comes. Backchannelling shows the chain is followed by other participants. The underlying complication in this case is that S2, who makes the suggestion, is a senior academic and this is a seminar session that he is teaching. These situational factors may help sustain listener interest despite his embarking on a lengthy explanation of solution alternatives; he has a captive audience.

(4.8)   <S2> *i have a suggestion* <SS> @@ </SS> now er of course you might not get er it's like the second cycle so if PRD1 would deliver this DNA into the cytosol the chances that you know that there's a small chance that it replicates <S5> yes </S5> and it but it makes bam-35 and [maybe] <S5> [yes] </S5> a gram-negative cell would be supporting that er assembly process er that you but the first thing of the system wouldn't the lysis system wouldn't work because it's a gram-positive but <u>if you open up the cells and plate them on the host on on the bam-35 host you might get a plaque</u> remember plaque is a single molecule er device system so y- you you might be able to see a a few plaques </S2> . . .

The example also illustrates shared humour indicated by collective laughter. In this case the laughter may arise from the awareness of the speech act being something of a misnomer: a "suggestion" offered by the seminar leader in effect implies explaining or clarifying the problem at hand and providing a solution. It is likely to be taken as the correct solution, which at the very least carries special authority. It will hardly be treated on a par with a suggestion from one of the students. Laughter is interesting in such cases, as it tends to accompany discourse reflexivity fairly frequently, and with its wide range of important functions in interaction (e.g. Glenn 2003) would be worth exploring further in connection with reflexive metadiscourse, although it is beyond the present scope.

All forward-oriented discourse reflexivity in this section has been about the speaker and their intentions. We can therefore call them *egocentric*. For the present it suffices to distinguish egocentric, or self-referring, speech from *altercentric*, or other-referring speech. The distinction becomes particularly relevant with

retrieving discourse reflexivity in the next section (4.2.2) and will be discussed more thoroughly there.

Responding to others

The co-presence of speakers activates participants' awareness of others, and this affects the way the discourse takes shape. Even if speakers simply indicate the speech act they intend to perform, they tend to relate their turn to other participants, like *as you say* in (4.9).

(4.9)   <S4> erm ***i have a question*** concerning these er rules which are b- @bound to be ignored@ *as you say* <u>is it because of some conservative models in the society does this influence [the judgements]</u> </S4>

The question (*is it because of . . .*) does not follow the reflexive expression immediately, much like *suggestion* in (4.8), even though in this case the delay is shorter. For how long a speaker can delay confirming the expectation they have set up, what factors can sustain it, and at which point will co-participants' expectation be revised if the prospection is not fulfilled is an open question. Clearly, distractions and interruptions happen in interactive speech situations, and it is possible that predictions will either be revised or simply fade away even if they have been strong to begin with. There may be ways of keeping predictions alive, but little is known about what the role of different means of prospection, specifically reflexive metadiscourse, might be in dialogic interaction.

Explicit prospection can flout implicit predictions of speech acts. S4 in (4.10) explains that instead of a question, she is going to give a *reminder*. In the situation there was, however, no explicit bid for questions. This is a graduate seminar where the presentation was followed by the chair's invitation to *reaction from the audience*. The first two people who took the floor did ask questions, then also challenged the responses, and argued back and forth with the presenter. S4's metadiscourse suggests an awareness of an underlying convention or default expectation that 'comments to the presenter' mean questions.

(4.10)   <S1> <NAME S4> yep you first </S1>
   <S4> *oh er no just a small reminder it's not meant a question* <u>you mentioned</u> that the turkey wasn't accepted because of they were religious </S4>

In conference discussions it is quite common to find reflexive references to other speech acts than questions. S25 in (4.11) presents a *challenge*. The example comes

from a conference where the issue (*difference* referring to variable copyright practices) came up during discussion, not in a presentation.

(4.11)   <S25> <u>i don't know if there are experts in this room which might might might well address the difference</u> but *one one more challenge i'd like to put* like like <NAME NS16> was speaking about the university practices that i'm i'm quite be- bewildered about . . .

Before representing his turn as a *challenge*, this speaker starts with an explicit call for collective construction of knowledge (. . . *if there are experts in this room which might . . . address . . .*) Hereby the speaker also steers the discussion towards his preferred direction, manifesting the competitive side of academic discussion.

   A very common speech act following a presentation is a comment (see Section 4.2.2 for more discussion). In (4.12) the speaker is the chairperson and follows a tacit norm of allocating turns to others before himself. He again explicitly relates his turn to others, first to his fellow listeners who appear to have exhausted their comments (*if **you** don't have* [*more comments*]), then to the specific addressee (***your** presentation*). This is a typical case of discourse reflexivity contextualising turns with respect to discourse that is being jointly created.

(4.12)   <S1> if you don't have then *i have couple of comments reactions* to this <u>to your presentation</u> . . .

Modifiers are used for a more nuanced idea of what is to be expected in a speech act. Example (4.13) gives a kind of forewarning that the addressee is going to be challenged by the question. At the same time the preparatory modifier *difficult* reduces a potential face-threat to the addressee in case he is not able to come up with a ready answer. Phrasing the reflexive move as a request (*can I ask*) further mitigates the presumed challenge.

(4.13)   <S3> [mhm-hm okay] okay okay that's fine okay. *can i ask you a difficult question* <S2> yeah </S2> basically is this . . .

In regulated multi-party discussions speakers face the complex task of waiting for their turn while the conversation continues to directions that may or may not be relevant to what they had in mind when they made a bid to talk. Below (4.14) the current speaker (S24) returns to a previous topic, which had meanwhile been followed by a different topic with three turns between two speakers. The topic S24 revives is one that may have been particularly salient for her, because she had

originally talked about it in her own presentation earlier in the same conference. Moreover, the speaker who first brought it up in the present discussion explicitly referred to S24's presentation. The chair (S23) offers the floor to (S24) when her turn comes.

(4.14) <S23> [mhm-hm] <NAME S24> please </S23>
    <S24> uh-huh *just to continue a little bit* with regard to the UNESCO convention proposal . . .

Because the topic had been in the ongoing discussion in addition to the earlier presentation, it was presumably available in the representation that participants shared of the discussion at the time. In other words, it was likely to be in their shared situation models, and a reminding cue could probably help refresh the relevant long-term working memory representation. Using a verb like CONTINUE when the previous topic had been something quite different apparently requires some explicit contextualisation before the speaker can pursue it again. It is also interesting that when this speaker proceeds to what might be regarded as her 'own' topic, she mitigates the reflexive expression (*just . . . a little bit*) as if minimising the imposition on others. By elaborating the resumed topic at this stage, S24 contributes further to the collaborative incrementation of shared understanding, thus advancing the ongoing co-construction of knowledge.

In this section, many linguistically explicit signs of speakers' awareness of the presence of others in the situation are manifest. Our attention has nevertheless been on the orienting uses of their metadiscourse which refer to the speakers themselves, that is, are egocentric.

Involving others

So far, we have talked about discourse reflexivity preparing ground for what the speaker is about to say next. Metadiscourse need not of course precede the utterance it talks about but for instance in questions the grounds may come first, like in (4.15). Moreover, it then becomes relevant to address the person from whom the answer is sought, in an *altercentric* (other-centred) reference.

(4.15) <S1> . . . <NAME S6> already er touched this topic but is it somehow related to i would think about the tradition of Ostpolitik er er er in the first place but er *if you could ela- elaborate on that* er as well </S1>

Answer elicitations for assessment prompt an interlocutor to give their view of some topic matter either as an individual, as in (4.16), or as a representative of a

group (4.17, 4.18). In (4.17) the addressee is positioned as a specialist, with the implication that collective expertise is behind her assessment rather than her personal view. The addressee has given a presentation in a graduate seminar, and a fellow student (S5) is trying to get to the bottom of the assessment of coffee quality. In (4.18), by contrast, the addressee is invited to adopt the viewpoint of a specified group.

(4.16) <S5> . . . Basque country or Northern Ireland so, *would you say* that in the Balkans they are more violent or they they are of a different importance or different significance </S5>

(4.17) <S5> [yeah] but still can you *can you say that* the c- coffee with l- less acid is better quality level (than) high acid </S5>

(4.18) . . . but anyhow it will take us somewhere better and and er *maybe you could comment from Indian Indian perception* but some (of the) at least in in s- in several aboriginal knowledge systems this kind of, notion . . .

An addressee can be pushed towards a very specific answer, as in (4.19), but sometimes questions can be vague, and not even identify an addressee (4.20).

(4.19) <S2> *can you say more precisely* who they are </S2

(4.20) . . . or whether, Sweden is too young a country to have er experienced this sort of wave of enthusiasm for a colonialisation *i don't know who would. could answer that question* </S10>

The last few examples have illustrated uses of metadiscourse other than advance orientation to the speaker's upcoming contribution or rhetorical addressing of their listeners. Speakers in these cases relate their turns to those of others and seek answers or new knowledge from other participants. They also tend to refer to previous stages in the discussion, which are scrutinised in more detail in the next section.

4.2.2 Retrieving

Participants in a discussion continuously make predictions and simultaneously keep track of the discourse as it evolves, adjusting their representations and models of it. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is a cognitively demanding task, because

working memory is limited, short-lived, and verbatim memory lasts only a few seconds. Present discourse gets absorbed into what quickly becomes the past. Because retaining a verbatim record is virtually impossible beyond about ten seconds, representations of the discourse must be processed rapidly (Christiansen & Chater 2016), but they are also volatile.

As each participant processes the unfolding discourse, they generate their individual representations, which will not be identical but normally close enough to ensure a degree of coherence which enables the dialogue to continue. If not, or if different interpretations are experienced as conflicting in an important way, they can be contested and negotiated.

For something of past verbalisation to be re-introduced to present representations, its relevance needs to be restored, as anticipated in (4.14). What I call *retrieving* discourse reflexivity refers to something in a past state of the discourse which is brought into the present. Such segments of discourse may be retained in the current representations of all participants, or only some of them, at the very least the speaker who introduces them again. Often that past is very recent: previous turns and utterances, or things said just a moment ago. Discourse reflexivity cannot bring the past back. It picks an element from a past state, or more precisely, the speaker's representation of it, paraphrasing or otherwise transforming it, since the element is no longer available in unprocessed form. It is also devoid of much, or all, of its previous context.

Retrieving is one way of contextualising a speaker's new contributions. This is evinced in retrieving elements rarely occurring at ends of turns, but commonly at initial phases.

In the light of numbers, retrieving is a much larger category than orienting (see Chapter 8). This sets dialogue apart from monologic speech, and by the same token from written monologue. Retrieving discourse reflexivity falls into two principal types: egocentric (self-referring) and altercentric (other-referring). These two types were already seen operating in the previous section, where 'looking ahead' was essentially egocentric and 'responding to others' and 'involving others' were primarily altercentric. These two types also basically correspond to what I earlier (Mauranen 2001) discussed under *targeting* as 'monologic' and 'dialogic' orientations, mentioned already in Chapter 1. The third type, 'interactive' orientation, is now discussed under 'managing the situation' in Section 4.3. Part of the reason for modifying the terminology was that altercentric references have two major subtypes, addressee-reference and third-party reference, which seem important to keep apart in dialogic situations. Egocentric and altercentric reference are discussed in the next two sections, beginning from egocentric references.

Egocentric reference

Speakers often return to points made at an earlies stage of their own ongoing speech with *egocentric references*. Egocentric references are different from Hyland's (2005) self-mentions, in that these limit speaker-references to those that are accompanied by references to the discourse. Discourse reflexive egocentric references thereby include the speaker only in the capacity of the current speaker.

In discussions following a presentation, many references relate to the talk just heard. This is true of presenters and their co-participants alike. Presenters typically refer to what they said in their talk (4.21).

(4.21)   . . . at the in the beginning *somewhere in my lecture i said something about this* and . . .

Egocentric references typically expand on what speakers have already said. They may clarify what they meant (4.22) or add something they might have wanted to say but did not in an earlier turn or presentation (4.23).

(4.22)   <S11> erm er there were s- many erm the main female activities in Finland those days . . . schooling in the household matters was emphasised and er yeah *i maybe was not very clear saying* that i think it is a kind of a similar phenomenon like erm that er the American black took . . .

(4.23)   . . . i do think it's it has less to do with the curriculum itself but more with the kind of interaction you are prepared to take in regard to the curricula <S3> mhm-hm </S3>, and *that's why i was putting this stress on* agency as a mediation between adult and child . . .

The expression *as I said* (with its rarer variant *as I mentioned*) deserves some special attention. While it seemingly accompanies a repeat of what the speaker already said, which in a strict sense would appear quite redundant because it should have been incorporated into shared knowledge already, it usually introduces a rephrase, or even something new. This consists of the speaker's construal of what they previously said and an indication of its current relevance. Such a reference raises a strong prospection that a restatement of a previous position will follow. Even though this expectation is virtually invariably fulfilled, it will rarely reappear in an identical form to the first time. *As I said* has a strong tendency to precede the reformulation: in only one instance in this data did a speaker add it as if an afterthought to his turn. *As I said* is thus a Janus-faced indicator of retrieving and prospecting discourse reflexivity. However, even though *as I said* is very frequent in monologues (Chapter 7), it is much less common in dialogues (4.24).

(4.24)   <S6> well *as i said* there were some there were this er three threats . . .

Even though 'retrieving' discourse reflexivity makes retrospective connections, it also points forward as we have seen: the important distinction between 'retrieving' and 'orienting' is not that one looks back and the other ahead, but that orienting reflexive discourse only looks ahead. In terms of discourse dynamism, forward is indeed the dominant direction, in harmony with speech processing.

A small number of egocentric references nevertheless actually seem to look only back to what the speaker just said. These follow immediately after the utterance they refer to, thus staying within the limits of the working memory. They seem to occur in two functions, one of which labels a speech act retrospectively (4.25, 4.26). These retrospective characterisations appear at turn completions, as if confirming the nature of the speech act just made.

(4.25)   <S1> er i'm using the the books and writings of . . . so i'm not i haven't done very much of that kind of temporal work yet *that's very short answer* </S1>

(4.26)   <S8> . . . along with certain models of democracy *that is er my own reflection on the point* </S8>

The second function of these immediate retrospections is to follow an expression of stance or evaluation. Unlike retrospective speech act labels, stance and evaluation are not always turn-final but may be followed by a reason (4.27) or further elaboration (4.28).

(4.27)   <S4> well maybe @more violent@ *i would say* consider all these wars and fights and even that it caused an interference like the United States and the united . . .

(4.28)   <S6> well alright you may say it's a religion but its nowadays appearance is very much protestant *i would say* erm even more Zwinglian issue of life or Calvinist because erm er religion is not an abstract.

More commonly, discourse reflexive indications of evaluation come early in a turn, if not right at the beginning, then at least before the evaluative statement itself. An orienting example was seen in (4.3), and monologues also show a similar tendency (Chapter 7).

Egocentric referring also seems to play a role in indicating the speaker's self-consistency, which is obviously central to debating a point, as in (4.29).

(4.29)   <S4> [i agree with] you because what *what i am saying* is really based on
          practical project for example . . .

This supports R. Craig & Sanusi's (2000) analysis identifying expressions like *I'm
just saying* as speakers' pragmatic devices for claiming they have held a consis-
tent argumentative standpoint all along.

    Speakers also refer to what was *not* their past discourse, that is, what they
did not talk about but now appear to have second thoughts about. Both (4.30) and
(4.31) recognise an omission in their talks, the first one putting it down to the
focus chosen, the latter using the omission as a springboard to say more. Both go
on to talk about the previously omitted topic, so the reference in effect assumes a
forward-looking role, despite its retrospective character.

(4.30)   <S6> yeah well yeah here i wanted to focus only on this so <S5> mhm </S5> *i
          didn't talk anything about* the economic cooperation but of course this is in
          the in the ASEAN declaration . . .

(4.31)   <S2> yeah well er there is er one thing *i forgot to mention*, there is a differ-
          ence in the conditions . . .

Occasionally presentations are distributed in writing in advance. In such cases,
the written paper can be referred to in the discussion. It could well be argued
such cases are not part of the current discourse, and they certainly border on
intertextuality. In the present analysis they were taken to be part of the current
discourse when speakers treated them as shared experience, like in (4.32).

(4.32)   <S2> yeah that's true and again *i'm referring to my paper* because there is
          there's this larger, er sort of framing . . .

By merely looking at egocentric references, we can begin to discern certain more
general differences between longer and shorter discussions. Longer discussions are
less confined to a given topic and assume more of a life of their own than do the
five-minute conference slots. They branch out into new directions and wander off
the point of departure, and there are more self-references to speakers' earlier dis-
cussion turns (4.33) instead of only to their presentations. In brief, long discussions
show signs of self-organising.

(4.33)   <S10> . . . Sweden has er now been redefined itself as a sort of the north as
          well just like er other (xx) and *perhaps i already said that* i thought ah yeah
          you know the the myth of Sweden as the the north . . .

Most conference discussion sections tend to be short and focused on the preceding presentation, but sometimes they consist of longer sessions after a few consecutive papers. By contrast, graduate seminars divide their time in favour of discussion, keeping presentations short. It would be very interesting to see more comprehensive analyses into this phenomenon, which might have the potential for altering conventional practices in conferences. Longer discussions might lead to more fruitful exchanges and more new ideas.

Altercentric reference

Most of the time people do not talk about their own earlier talk but that of others. The overwhelming majority (about three quarters) of retrieving discourse reflexivity refers to other speakers' speech, mostly to a second person addressee. These *altercentric references* typically consist of a representation of what the addressee had said or talked about, followed by a question, objection, or a comment. The typical pattern has two parts: first a paraphrase of an earlier statement and then uttering something new, which follows the same pattern as seen in egocentric references like *as I said*. Altercentric references thus typically act as springboards for the current speaker's point, comment, or question. They tend to occur as turn-initial segments that precede questions or follow an orienting segment (*I would like to ask a question you mentioned* er many . . .). Altercentric references are especially central in negotiating and debating (Chapter 6). There are two principal kinds of altercentric references: second-person references to specific interlocutors, that is, *addressee-references*, and third-person references, or *third-party references*. I will discuss addressee-references first and look into third-party references next.

Speakers usually turn to a particular interlocutor even in multi-party discussions. The overwhelming majority of altercentric references, more than two thirds (71.3%) are directed at a specific addressee. Given that an equally large majority of all retrieving references are made to others than self, and with retrieving being the principal type of contextualising dialogue, we can conclude that this is prototypical discourse reflexivity in dialogic interaction: talking about what an interlocutor has said. This stands in a clear contrast to monologue and thus implies a necessary departure from traditional metadiscourse study.

Many academic discussions are structured to make a dyadic exchange the default mode: discussions typically follow presentations, turns are allocated to one member of the audience at a time by a chairperson, with the expectation that turns are oriented to the presentation and consist in questions or comments to the presenter. The default expectation seems to be that questions are asked, as was seen in example (4.10). As already noted, longer discussions follow the structure more loosely, which allows for more varied reference patterns.

Contrary to what seems to be the general expectation, comments on a presentation are more common than questions, and addressee-references typically employ what I have previously (Mauranen 2010, 2012) called the *springboard function*: a speaker latches on to another speaker's turn and goes on to develop their own point from there (4.34).

(4.34)   <S23> . . . i'm just, thinking of this basic pattern *you have been describing and er want to point out that* er the multinational corporations er partly the same corporations that are very eager to press on er in intellectual pro- er property er and to tighten . . .

The springboard from which the current speaker leaps onto their own views after connecting to a previous turn can occasionally be slightly wobbly, and lead to a new focus as happens with S11 below (4.35).

(4.35)   <S11> but *but the question you used* about is there an urban history at all a discipline where (xx) many years ago Castells started the discussion about is there an urban sociology because . . .

As participants develop each other's topics, they also develop each speaker's own thoughts. While they increment the discourse, they also increment shared, emerging new knowledge (see Chapter 6). In the process they seek backing from each other and acknowledge each other's parts in the collaborative intellectual effort, as the speaker does with his altercentric reference in (4.36).

(4.36)   <S10> . . . in the 17th century who thought of the north as the not the periphery but the centre *i think you mentioned it something to that as well* but the north was the place where the goths came from and they were the ones who se- seeded Europe with culture and they had this bizarre dream of of Sweden as the centre of civilisation . . .

Sometimes a speaker provides a *construal* of the addressee's meaning, a 'candidate understanding' (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018). In (4.37), S5 offers a conceptualisation of what he takes S2's presentation to imply (*you are talking about sort of bureaucratic repression er that kind of repression call it repression*) and seeks confirmation from S2 to his comment arising from this interpretation (*wouldn't you say*).

(4.37)   <S5> just a comment *wouldn't you say* that is a situation that is quite prevalent in in a number of countries in Europe i mean that happens if you if

you only talking about er or let me correct myself not only but **you are talking about sort of bureaucratic repression** er that kind of repression call it repression it goes on for example in . . . so it is difficult to get a citizenship it is difficult to get social security and so on </S5>
<S2> yeah yeah [i agree] </S2>

Construals are sometimes made in a very tentative manner, as illustrated by the next extract (4.38), which comes from a lively seminar discussion which has branched out from a presentation, and the presenter has become just one among the participants. Neither is there much intervention from the chair, so the discussion has much of the air of an informal intellectual conversation. Speakers respond to each other's developments of the themes. S9 resorts to hedging (*I don't know if I followed your idea*) and vagueness (*something like*) before his tentative construal of what S10 has said (*I wonder if you meant something like*). She confirms his interpretation (*yes I think*), and goes on to expand on it (*because in science . . .*).

(4.38)   <S9> . . . in that sense i i i think knowledge is not value-free the values come come in and and i i *i don't know if i followed* your [idea] <SU-10> [mhm-hm] </SU-10> clearly i *i wonder if you meant something like* having for instance er modern science as a religion in place of religion or believing in myths and letting it explain the world or (xx) </S9>
<S10> *yes i think*, because in science we love this knowledge term especially </S10>

Altercentric references are good indicators of the collective nature of sharing understanding. By acknowledging each other's contributions, participants engage in mutual scaffolding of the understanding that emerges from the discussion (4.39).

(4.39)   </S1> this case er obviously er aid in 96 was cut but not all aid so *like you said* it's very difficult to cut all aid it it er raises a question now in Tanzan-in Tanzania the the parties er supposedly reformed before they were told to . . .

Acknowledging other speakers also demonstrates positive evaluation, like above, even without overtly evaluative words like *good*, *important*, or *appreciate*.

Negative evaluation is harder to find, which is probably linked to the general *linguistic positivity bias* (aka *the Pollyanna principle*, cf. Matlin 2016) detected in several studies (e.g., Dodds et al. 2015). Dodds et al. assume that it is universal in human language. It is also found in academic writing (Wen & Lei 2022) as well as academic face-to-face conversations (Mauranen 2002). Negative evaluations tend

to be more veiled and mitigated than positive ones. In (4.40), *I see what you mean* could in principle be regarded as positive evaluation, but the context gives it away as a small concession before a contrary view. *But* follows without a pause, immediately indicating the position the speaker is about to take. The verb MEAN is of course somewhat marginally discourse reflexive, but in this exchange, it refers to what the previous speaker had just said, motivating a discourse reflexive interpretation.

(4.40)   . . . the argument for you know for argument for patent protection doesn't apply </S17>
<S22> erm well yes and no @i@ *see what you mean* <u>but</u> erm there's still a lot to be gained a lot of new knowledge i i imagine to be gained from traditional knowledge so giving no . . .

Other means for expressing negative evaluations than preceding concessions are indirectness (*struck me as being very national*) and using hedging (*struck me as **a little** odd*). In (4.41) the speaker employs both in turn. Ahead of the latter, more negative evaluation S4 makes a confirmation check on his construal (*right*). The reflexive elements highlight the way in which the speaker contrasts two perspectives on the topic: *you're talking about; your discussion* vs. *as we heard this morning*. S4 thus calls up support for his view from a previous talk, which also suggests his own representation of the issues may have moved on in the course of the macro-event.

(4.41)   <S4> er i would just er wanted to ask you a question about the kind of framing of your paper which <u>struck me as being very national</u> and *you're talking about* diasporic commu- communities which probably <u>as we heard this morning</u> er all sorts of connections er telephoning and media and financial connections er with other parts of the world and yet er you *your discussion* on immigration was entirely in terms of the Finnish nation <SS> @@ </SS> <S2> yeah </S2> <u>right</u> <S2> that's true </S2> that struck me as a as <u>a little o- odd</u>

Even though comments are more frequent than questions in altercentric references, questions are of course also asked. Questions to presenters tend to be prefaced by identifying the topic. In (4.42) the speaker first refers to the talk (*two points you raised in the presentation you said . . . and you said*), which demarcate his interest area before actually asking the question (*now how come Zambia is not . . .*).

(4.42)   <S1> okay more concrete perhaps er *two points you raised in the presentation you said* that voters for or or opposition party people er also critical people

like journalists have been intimidated in Zambia and *you said* that there is a very weak democratic culture in the country er those two things would definitely be attributed to Zimbabwe <u>now how come Zambia is not in the news all the time and how come Zimbabwe is</u> </S1>

Unlike presentations, discussion turns are not prepared in advance, which shows in their occasionally complicated structuring. In the following instance (4.43), questions and altercentric references become interleaved in the framing and structuring of the questions. First a reference to the addressee prefaces a yes-no question (*are you referring only to . . . or are you referring to*), but the speaker does not pause for an answer before moving on to a second, more specific question of the wh- type (*what about Bulgaria*). Finally, the second question is followed by another reference to the talk (*because you mentioned that*) as if motivating the question. We get the impression that the speaker is thinking on his feet.

(4.43)   <S5> *when you are talking about* the ethnic groups different ethnic groups <u>*are you referring only to*</u> former Yugoslavia or <u>*are you referring to*</u> some other countries in the region, <u>what about</u> Bulgaria because *you mentioned [that* these] <S4> [yeah well] </S4> ethnic that there are ethnic boundaries which prevent cooperation among [among the peoples] </S5>

Questions can be contextualised in multiple ways by clusters of different kinds of reflexive metadiscourse like below (4.44), where S9 goes through the phases of question flagging (*one more . . . actually I have the same question as* <NAME S8> *but I have another one for you too*), referring to the addressee's talk (*you told us about . . .*) and only after that proceeding to the question (*have you detected . . .*).

(4.44)   <S9> *one more* <S2> yes </S2> actually *i have the same question as <NAME S8> but i have another one for you too,* er **you told us about** the general model of education <u>have you detected any kind of regional interests or unease of technological teaching in Finland by the professors who first went to Germany and then came back to Finland, or</u> *is it hard to say* <u>if there are any</u> </S9>

In all, altercentric discourse reflexivity referring to addressees makes explicit what speakers find relevant or interesting in other speakers' contributions, how pieces fit together as shared understanding is being incremented (or situation models aligned) by different participants and helps structure questions and comments in complex communication.

To move on to the second kind of altercentric discourse reflexivity, let us see how third-person references come into it. Apart from ourselves and second-person addressees, we can obviously also talk about what third parties have said in the ongoing discourse. When speakers invoke preceding discourse, they can attribute it to an identifiable individual (*the previous speaker talked about*) or to nobody specifically (*as I learned from earlier presentations*). However, although third-party references occur, they are not very frequent. While they are almost as common as egocentric references, neither of these occur nearly as often as addressee-references.

Third-person references resemble addressee-references in that they identify a relevant contribution by another speaker and bring this into the discussion. This focuses and contextualises the speaker's own utterance and serves as a springboard for developing their own point (4.45).

(4.45)   <S24> yeah *i would just like to push a little bit further* **his suggestion** *because i think that* **what he was suggesting** (xx) with I-Ps you have this er incentive er objective but in traditional knowledge you don't have it **as he said** and maybe maybe the I-P type of protection is not at all the right kind of protection for traditional knowledge </S24>
<S22> yeah you're [probably right] </S22>

Academic (micro-)events can be embedded within larger macro-events, as discussed in Chapter 3. Cross-references to other micro-events in the larger whole or the macro-event are characteristic of conferences and university courses like graduate seminars. The next two examples illustrate both these event types and how metadiscoursal connections are made between the discussion at hand and a previous talk within the same macro-event. In both cases it is the chairperson who makes the connections. The first (4.46) comes from a conference where a section chair is linking threads from different presentations, and the second (4.47) from a graduate seminar where the leader is relating the present discussion to a previous presentation in the same course. Both instances show how new connections between concepts and ideas get stimulated and forged in these events. It is also interesting to note and supportive of the macro-event notion that the seminar leader in (4.48) refers to someone's presentation a month earlier as having taken place *in this discussion.*

(4.46)   <S18> yeah i agree and er and there's yeah er i think *there's a very nice link between <NAME S8>'s presentation to to that what er <NAME NS16> said in his keynote in the very beginning of this conference* and <NAME NS16> is

here so if he's got something to say, you can do that but here's another com-
ment before that </S18>

(4.47)   . . . these things like inference and arguments and and *what <NAME> was
was explaining er a month ago here in in this er discussion* that that there's er
something about this this er argument er *he was talking about* Socrates . . .

References to earlier talks can be specific without directly naming the person
who presented the ideas reformulated by the current speaker (4.48):

(4.48)   <S2> mhm *the last presentation on on on Tuesday er we heard* that there's
still a very strong fixation in the region on on the nation state and not so
much talk not so much practise in regional cooperation and *the person who
made the presentation* recommended very much that there should be . . .

In addition to third party references to persons, presentations, or points made, col-
lective references to all those present, a 'collective *we*' also appears in similar func-
tions. This resembles an 'inclusive *we*', with the difference that the speaker may
not have been involved in the discussion referred to (4.49). In some sense this is an
imagined *we*, the group that comprises present participants communally. These col-
lective references tend to prioritise a general topic, as in (4.49), where the speaker
presents an interpretation of what is going on in this discussion. Before him, one
other speaker has asked a question on the preceding presentation, but S20 has not
spoken during this conference section before this point. *We*, therefore, does not
strictly speaking include him. The next instance (4.51) also shows a speaker constru-
ing collective discussion with the group as the discussing subject, as it were. He
also weaves distinct vagueness into his résumé of topics (*all these . . . and things
like that*), which prepares ground for the fairly open question he then puts to the
presenter.

(4.49)   <S20> er thank you very much for the the interesting presentation er *some
comments and then a question* from the UN perspective erm *i think here we
are discussing* a missing link between er information technology and and
er poverty reduction . . .

(4.50)   <S7> yes er now that we've been *the last two days we've been discussing* <u>all
these</u> open source software issues <u>and things like that</u> . . .

References to previous talk can be even less personal than collective *we*. The referent can be a presentation, or a point made, without any person-reference. Such references characteristically involve evaluation:

(4.51)   <S1> [@*that's that's a very interesting*] [*question*@] </S1

(4.52)   <S1> okay <COUGH> *this was* <COUGH> *more or less the first presentation which had a very strong theoretical* in in this (xx) so in that respective *it was a good presentation,*

In all these unattributed, apparently impersonal references, the implied addressee or referent tends to be present, or if not, is usually recognisable to the participants. Altogether third-party references are relatively infrequent, which would seem to reflect participants' predominant orientation to those present. The largest type of all contextualising references is the second person altercentric reference, which certainly seems to support the prevalence of orientation to co-present others.

This section has discussed altercentric references, highlighting the role of discourse reflexivity in navigating dialogue in interactional discourse. What has emerged as the core has been speakers' engagement with each other's talk and the many ways in which they weave their talk together. Different speakers' contributions get entwined into the common thread of the discourse, which progresses from its initial settings towards unforeseen outcomes through constant co-construction by the participants.

4.3 Managing situation

Discussion needs managing. Even casual conversations require ways of opening and closing, ways for people to join or leave the conversation, to move to a new phase or change physical location, and many other managing acts that may not appear prominent or important, but which ensure the smooth progression of talk. Institutional settings tend to impose more order on discussions which perform institutional functions. Meetings, formal procedures, and ceremonies are closely regulated, with clearly outlined role slots in institutional settings. This holds for relatively permanent institutions, such as universities, but also temporary academic event types like conferences, whose close adherence to traditions and disciplinary specificities is noteworthy. Even relatively free-flowing institutional discussions have their duration scheduled and their management assigned to select individuals. In our data, events usually also include at least chairperson roles. Some graduate seminars rotate the

chair role among students, but most are chaired by the senior academic whose task is to run the seminar. Thesis defences have their additional set roles and procedures. Interestingly, even student work groups seem to get self-organised along the lines of institutional practices, appointing a secretary and a chairperson, although there is no formal requirement to do so.

Situation management in the present data is, unsurprisingly, far more common in dialogic than monologic discourse, but even in dialogues it accounts for just over a fifth of all discourse reflexivity, which suggests that it plays a relatively small though persistent role compared to discourse management, at least in terms of metadiscourse. It is possible that the situation management talk captured in our recordings is an underestimate of its amount because such talk easily gets cut off from event beginnings and endings. From time to time, practical talk around moving equipment, booting laptops, opening or closing windows and the like were recorded, but although these manage the situation in some sense, they rarely make reference to talk and were therefore excluded as irrelevant. Situation management corresponds roughly to the third type of discourse reflexivity in my previous classification of targeting in dialogues (Mauranen 2001) and is very similar to what at that point I called the 'interactive' orientation (clearly, not a felicitous term!).

Many practices of situation management are highly conventionalised and routine- like, though not all. At the most conventionalised end, chairpersons carry out situation management in discussions, usually with brief formulaic turns. Apart from routine openings (*questions comments arguments please*) and closings of discussion sections (okay *there aren't any other comments*), chairperson duties often include introducing presenters (4.53) and sequencing and ordering the events (4.54)

(4.53)   <S4> everyone is now satisfied with coffee so *let's continue i have er i have a great honour and pleasure introduce*, professor <NAME NS13> er who already yesterday *gave us excellent lecture* . . .

(4.54)   <S2> thank you er docent <NAME S1> . . . it's time to introduce doctor <NAME S3> er *we probably have these two presentations first and after that we will have a joint discussion* . . .

Situation management is not, however, limited to routine exchanges. It also happens that managing discourse and managing situation get interleaved when participants other than the chair make a move to alter the flow of the discussion. If a speaker adopts an 'external' perspective of the ongoing discussion instead of engaging with the issues being talked about, we can talk about a *plane-shift* and

regard the instance as managing the situation rather than managing the discourse, as we can see in (4.55) and (4.56).

(4.55)   *. . . I better be @be quiet now@ otherwise we* **this would be di- dialogue between us professors** *and and it's not the purpose of the course;*

(4.56)   <S3> *no actually* **it was a very very nice discussion** *I really enjoyed it I really liked it* </S3>

A plane-shift can be a competitive move, or an act of power, where a discussion participant seeks a leader position, trying to steer the discussion towards or away from topics, as if a self-appointed chairperson (see also Chapter 6). To look first at a case (4.57) where a chairperson suggests where the discussion could go next, and a participant taking this up, the chair (S23) prompts participants to move towards a certain direction (*I would . . . encourage er you to carry on with the discussion . . . so let's talk er more generally of . . .*). A participant (S24) is quick to act upon the suggestion. He refers to a third participant's earlier point as a springboard for his own (*I would just like to push a little bit further his suggestion*). Here the new direction came from the chair and there is no evident issue with power.

(4.57)   <S23> mhm *i would* <COUGH>*, encourage y- er encourage er you to* **carry on with the discussion** *er er suggesting that* that we forget a- about patents here because . . . and in traditional er kna- knowledge er er that is a er non sequitur <S22> mhm-hm </S22> *so* **let's talk er more generally** *of* erm I-P protection, please </S23>
          <S24> yeah *i would just like to push a little bit further his suggestion because i think that what he was suggesting* (xx) with I-Ps you have this . . . but in traditional knowledge you don't have it *as he said* and maybe maybe the I-P type of protection is not at all the right kind of protection for traditional knowledge </S24>

Even though it is the chairperson's prerogative to act on the situational plane, conference chairpersons do not usually attempt to dominate the discussion. They tend to act more like moderators – there to run the discussion. Chairs and moderators can direct co-participants' attention towards topics and foci and away from others but this is not a duty following from the position. By contrast, plane-shifts by other participants come across as deliberate moves to alter the course of the discussion. This implies challenging the way the discourse is moving. These interventions are power-related more than those by a chairperson precisely because situation management is allocated elsewhere.

Participants' spontaneous plane-shifts fall into two types in our data: speakers either try to instigate a topic change, or they seek to alter turn allocation. The first kind concerns the choice of topic. Example (4.58) comes from a discussion which started after a presentation but has moved on to less structured talking about more general issues. S2 and S4 debate the value of a given topic for the discussion. S2 makes a plane-shift and challenges a topic S4 started earlier (*we have to try to, you know go away from this these talks about . . .*), upon which S4, also assuming the management plane, comments on S2's topic choice (*now you're talking about*), and after a concession towards it (*it's essential what you say*) moves back to his own position. S2 will not give up (*i would ask if you say that*), but S4 now completely dismisses S2's proposal (*it's one of those general questions we can talk over and over again*). The two speakers thus debate the terms of the discussion, and their arguments defend their respective preferences concerning the situation, rather than issues within a discussion.

(4.58)   <S2> no but i think we have to **we have to try to**, you know **go away from this these talks about** content here and process there <SU> yes </SU> <S4> mhm </S4> but look at at concrete examples . . . what does it mean to be a citizen [within] <SU> [yes] </SU> a classroom and things like that which is very much process isn't it </S2>

<S4> well it all depends on the content i mean **now you are <SS> [@@] </SS> [talking about], now you're talking about** i can understand why *you argue this way* and *i agree* with you but but sometimes and apart from that other it's very *it's essential what you say* i have to train teachers who have to teach history . . . at a certain time they start teaching history you start teaching literature you start film, er art history and then there's a different er content of content </S4>

<S2> okay *i would i would ask if you say that* you know i have to teach history so, what what is history why is history for me important in that that moment in time er it [it it means if you are] </S2>

<S4> **[it's one of those general questions] we can talk over and over again** [(xx)] </S4>

Topic challenges can be successful. In (4.59) a speaker (S4, not the chair) instigates a plane-shift by suggesting a change of topic (***I would like to suggest not to go on about this term . . . . let's stop about it***). It provokes a self-justification from the person (S1, the chair) who originated the topic (*my kind of argument is*) and now repeats her initial argument, but then backs down on her previous position, and underscores her agreement with S4 on the appropriate topic (*but of course **I agree with you** . . . I was just trying to account for my reluctance **to use this***

kind of words but it's you're quite right ***I quite agree with you***). S4 then takes the floor and, shifting back to discourse management, puts a question to the previous presenter, in effect steering the discussion away from what he found an objectionable topic.

(4.59)   <S4> ***i would like to suggest not to go on about this term*** but anyway i would like to defend some philosophers of postmodernism . . . doesn't exist but ***let's stop about it*** but <SS> [@@] </SS> [there are] there are some intelligent postmodernists who can [(xx)] </S4>
<SS> [@@] </SS>
<S1> sure now it's just you know it th- ***my kind of argument is er was*** along the line that in fact we tend very easily . . . we tended to forget the child *but of course i agree with you* it's er if you go down to it it's not it *okay* ***i was just trying to account for my reluctance to use this kind of er words*** but it's you're quite right i quite agree with you (it's) </S1>
<S4> <u>can i ask one question to the speaker</u> er i also agree with . . .

The second kind of plane-shift concerns turn-taking. When speakers initiate a change to this, they often admit to deviating from the standard practice, for example by seeking corroboration from the chair, as in (4.60). S34 takes the chair's (S18) *mhm-hm* as a permission to take over answering a question.

(4.60)   <S34> [i think] i think e- e- everything is changing *can i answer* <S18> mhm-hm </S18> *this* i think it's changing because . . .

Speakers also occasionally use plane-shifts as deflection tactics (4.61) by passing on a question to someone else, likewise assuming a role in running the situation.

(4.61)   <S6> *could you* <NAME S3> *specify* the difference between the German and the Swiss system here during the late 19th century *i didn't get really the er point* how change . . .
<S3> *i can't answer that maybe er* <NAME S7> *can answer to that* </S3>
<S7> *i mean i think the a- answer to this is* is er very easy i don't i don't think that there was anything different . . .

This section has illustrated situation management as manifest in discourse reflexivity. Although the same functions were found in conferences and graduate seminars, there were differences in their relative proportions. Instances of situation management were somewhat more frequent in seminars than in conferences (21.2% vs. 15.2%), but a striking difference appeared in the relative numbers of

who was doing the managing, the chairperson or a participant: while most management acts (87.6%) were by the chair in graduate seminars, in conference discussions close to a half (43.3%) were initiated by participants. This might reflect the unequal power balance in graduate seminars where the seminar leader represents academic staff and thus holds a higher institutional position. A fair number of seminars were student-chaired, though, thus ostensibly based on power equality, but the practice remained the same. Conference discussions take place between peers; although participants vary in status and seniority, discussion chairs may not be academically the most senior. Participant-instigated plane shifts should by this reasoning be easier at a conference than in a graduate seminar, where authority is more invested with one person.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated ways in which discourse reflexivity functions in dialogic academic discussions. At the outset, the discussion was limited to the *contextualising* function of reflexive metadiscourse, and the *negotiating* function postponed to a later chapter (Chapter 6). An initial distinction within contextualising metadiscourse was drawn between managing the discourse and managing the situation. *Discourse management* was easily the larger and more varied category, but *situation management* especially in its less obvious uses revealed certain interesting phenomena that have a bearing on how the interaction develops and how power may be involved in this and is therefore also worth taking on board.

The categories arrived at with the analysis are summarised in Figure 4.1 Reflexive discourse management serves a contextualising function, which makes the upcoming discourse relevant to the moment of speaking. There are two main ways of doing this: either a speaker can focus on what they are going to say next and provide advance orientation for listeners to expect it (the *orienting* function), or they can contextualise their speech by relating it to a topic that has been in the discussion previously and take that as their point of departure (the *retrieving* function). In effect, listeners use all available cues for anticipating what is to come, and both orienting and retrieving discourse reflexivity support their predictions; the difference is that orienting reflexivity only looks forward from the present, while retrieving reflexivity looks both ways and thus straddles past, present, and future states of the discourse. In some cases, there was a distinct delay between an explicit prospection and the prospected speech act, and the question arose as to how long it takes for hearers' predictions to be either revised or otherwise disappear after an explicit discourse reflexive prospection. This would warrant further research.
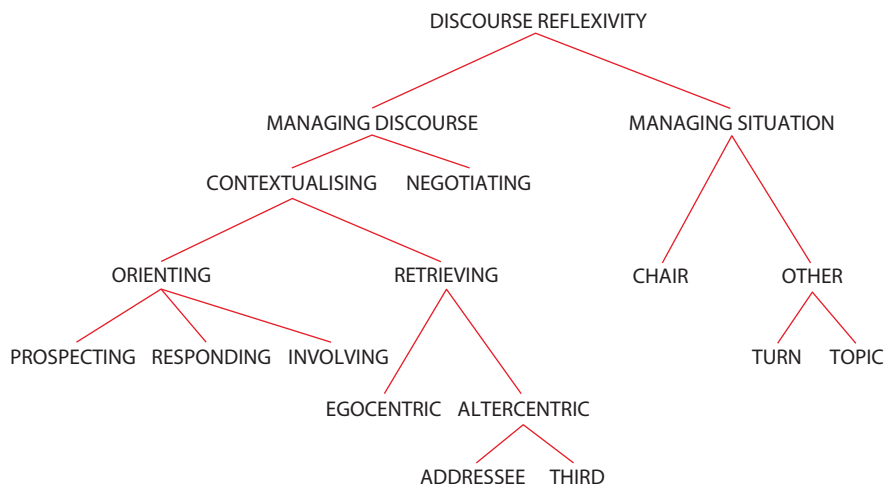
Figure 4.1: Discourse reflexivity in spoken dialogue.

Orienting reflexivity is not limited to prospecting (*pointing ahead*) and structuring the speaker's turn rhetorically, but a dialogic situation means that speakers also take steps to fit their turns to those of others (*responding to others*) and seek to bring others into the discourse (*involving others*). An important distinction cuts across these categories: referring to self, or *egocentric* discourse reflexivity, and referring to others, or *altercentric* discourse reflexivity. Egocentric reflexivity was by far the larger type in orienting discourse and accounted for over 70% of it in both conference (72.2%) and seminar (80.8%) dialogues. Attuning to other participants was evinced more clearly in retrieving discourse reflexivity. Reflecting this, the category divided into egocentric and altercentric types from the start. Egocentric discourse reflexivity refers to the speaker's own previous discourse, typically expanding on their earlier points, and if the retrospection is immediate, it tends to be evaluative. Egocentric references are also found to indicate the speaker's self-consistency. Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, speakers occasionally employ retrieving egocentric references to talk about matters they have not in fact discussed but present them as if they had. Yet, often the previous occasions were way beyond working memory capacity, therefore presumably only available in processed form rather than verbatim.

The more common type of retrieving references is altercentric. These are typically second-person references (*addressee-references*), which were more frequent than first- and third-person references put together. Typical uses of altercentric references were identified as *springboard*, the current speaker contextualising their own upcoming contribution in something the addressee had said, and *construal*,

where the current speaker offers their interpretation of what the addressee had said. In addition to an addressee, speakers also make retrieving references to third parties, either specified or unspecified others (*third-party references*).

An interesting difference was detected between longer and shorter discussions.

Conference discussions tend to be short and structured for exchanges between listeners and presenters, with the default expectation that hearers mostly ask questions from the presenter. This was not borne out by the data: comments were more common than questions. Moreover, it is interesting to note that longer discussions, be they conference sessions or graduate seminars, drifted off the confines of the five-minute slot not only in talking points but also in their more varied reference patterns. It would seem that although certain constraints apply to academic discussions, such as a generally strong topic-orientation, others may start loosening if restrictions like tight scheduling are removed; less temporally constrained discussions seemed to acquire characteristics more associated with ordinary conversation. This is certainly an issue worth further investigation, which could influence the ways conferences are typically shaped.

Discourse reflexivity is much less involved in managing the situation than in managing the discourse. Most of the time it is, predictably, chairpersons who perform situation managing acts, and much of it consists of routine speech acts, such as inviting questions, introducing speakers, allocating turns, and monitoring the schedule. More interestingly, other participants than the chair also take part in situation management. Such spontaneous management is typically performed as *plane-shifts*. Spontaneous plane-shifts are of two kinds: those seeking to set off a topic change and those trying to alter turn allocation. The former tend to occur without consulting the chair, the latter typically seek confirmation from the chair. A slightly surprising finding with regard to situation management was that graduate seminars and conference discussions were quite dissimilar with regard to who performed management acts: in graduate seminars 87.6% of management was run by the chair, whereas in conferences close to a half (43.3%) were participant-initiated, that is, spontaneous plane-shifts. This would seem to reflect the social parameter of status. A more equal power structure appears to give rise to a more equally distributed structure of situation management.

In all, a thread that runs across this chapter is a perceptible altercentric orientation among interacting participants. Discourse reflexivity serves to make explicit what participants see as relevant or interesting in other speakers' contributions and what it sparks off in their own thinking. Shared understanding is being incremented by co-present participants jointly, potentially leading to new ideas. Social parameters come into dialogic interaction in various ways, especially in self-organising tendencies, which seem to increase along with discussion length and power equality.