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EGOCENTRIC REFERENCE AS A PROBLEM FOR THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATION*

ROSANNA SORNICOLA

1. In recent years the study of variation phenomena, which has not been traditionally the main concern of linguistic theory, has grown in importance within scientific research, to such an extent that it has become necessary to revise and modify concepts that have become classic within the discipline. That is the case for the 'competence'~'performance' dichotomy, whose traditional definition, as formulated by Chomsky, has proved unable to withstand the impact of a more articulate and mature view of linguistic phenomena such as one that considers them as contextualized or completed only within communicative processes. The model according to which we distinguish sharply between the speaker's internal knowledge of a language and his actual verbal behaviour seems to be one of the reasons why cases of variation could not be easily or adequately placed in a theoretical perspective. When variability is confined in principle to performance (which means outside of the field of interest of linguistics, since this is predominantly concerned with competence phenomena), one is in effect making a few implicit assumptions:

a) Since deviation is due to performance, it belongs to the realm of the 'bizarre', of the unobservable.

b) There is no difference between the various types of variability, which means that all deviations from a sentence's well-formedness or a text's coherence are equally accidental and irrelevant.

c) Deviation can tell us little or nothing of interest on the nature of human language: only what the speaker *knows* can fully illustrate this phenomenon, whereas what the speaker *does* provides us with information of little value.

Before looking at these three assumptions, I should like to point out that they are the results of a further procedure in addition to the clearcut distinction between competence and performance. This latter procedure considers the ideal speaker-listener as the empirical basis of the theory, viewing him as independent from his particular geographic origin, his degree of instruction, his social class and from other variables which might eventually have some connection with his linguistic knowledge. In fact, this procedure of abstraction has led to the ideal speaker-listener's competence coinciding with that of the linguist himself. Needless to say, in this way it is not the method of idealization that is being used, though this would be quite legitimate within the logic of scientific research, when aptly applied, but a substitute of this which weakens the empirical basis of the procedure.[1] Indeed, both the notion of the 'well-formedness' of a sentence and the more recent and broader one of its 'appropriateness' are defined on the basis of a level of language which to a certain extent we might term standard. I say 'to a certain extent', because the fact that the linguist often investigates his *own personal* knowledge of language poses some methodological problems about intersubjective agreement: a register cannot be reconstructed on the basis of an idiolect.[2] It is true, however, that the linguist's individual competence forms an intuitive starting-point difficult to eliminate from practice. If supported by a more consistent amount of empirical data (such as checks or confirmation by native speakers, chosen according to characteristics that have been aptly predetermined), this can represent a heuristically relevant moment in the study of variation phenomena. It is in comparison with a standard competence that we can appreciate the difference between the well-formed, appropriate, textually coherent messages of the ideal speaker, who in some ways may coincide with the speaker of the standard language, and the messages, uttered by the real speaker; which are deviant from the viewpoint of well-formedness, appropriateness, textual coherence.

Let us now return to assumptions a)–c) which we had provisionally put aside. The first two, concerning the unobservability of variation phenomena and their equiprobability, have been adequately belied both within the sociolinguistic approach and by methodologies with a generative background, but directed

towards linguistic change. I shall not concern myself with these on this occasion. My interests lie rather in a discussion of assumption c), which states that the study of variation phenomena is not essential to the understanding of the key mechanisms of human language. I should like to demonstrate that this thesis is unfounded, by examining in particular the fact that language spoken by *real* users in actual dialogues presents communicative deviances from the behaviour expected of the *ideal* user, and this may contribute to a more articulate view of the notion of 'appropriateness'.[3] The procedure to be followed will be, as mentioned earlier, to confront the differences between the theoretical situation and the observed situation. I previously used this method to describe the field of dialectal variation in a small group interaction (cf. Sornicola: 1977). The deviances studied concerned phenomena which could be placed at various levels of what is traditionally termed grammar. The phenomenon that I have chosen to study here is instead a deviance of pragmatic nature, which upsets certain referential mechanisms expected in ideal communicative situations. More precisely we are dealing with an area of communicative misfunctions in which a general condition of successful reference is lacking, as has been summed up by Lyons:

'It is a condition of successful reference that the speaker should select a referring expression — typically a proper name, a definite noun-phrase or a pronoun — which, when it is employed in accordance with the rules of the language-system, will enable the hearer, in the context in which the utterance is made, to pick out the actual referent from the class of potential referents.'[4]

The speaker refers to a particular entity but does not enable the listener to identify it and, as we shall see, this may lead to different processes of understanding for the listener. To this general characteristic of such phenomena there should be added another, no less typical: the specific ways in which a referring expression is used do not conform to those expected in an ideal communicative situation; that is the use of proper nouns, definite descriptions, pronouns, does not satisfy the conditions which logicians and linguists have widely studied. Nevertheless, I shall return to this problem in more detail. For the moment I prefer to point out that, though the examples of these phenomena are varied, they contain a feature which distinguishes them from the

other phenomena of unsuccessful reference. I might anticipate a few later comments and say that their minimum common denominator is constituted by the 'egocentric' manner in which the speaker sets up the communicative relationship with the listener. In effect, the unsuccessful reference may be due to the speaker's mistaken assumption that the listener already possesses sufficient information about the referent, which he has in mind, to be able to identify it without difficulty. For reasons which we shall see this does not seem to be the case with the phenomena to be examined, in which it appears rather that the speakers does not make any assumptions about the network of information available to the listener. Thus I propose to term these phenomena 'egocentric reference'.

2.   Before going on to discuss the numerous aspects of the problem, it would be useful to examine some of the examples of the phenomenon, which I collected during a broader socio-linguistic study, at present being conducted in Naples. The fragments of text quoted come from the recording of spontaneous conversations between speakers, selected by random criteria from the city's population and some interviewers.

The first group of examples concerns the deviant use of pronominal expressions. This kind of 'error' appears in the texts of speakers E, F, O, S from a sample of 25 texts observed, produced by different subjects.

1) 'parlò um-milanese e-ddisse così / / noiə, da kuesto fatto ke-mmò   1
    parlavənə, il fatto di kuesto ragattso k-à fatt-ô ʃkertsə / / è stato   2
    stupido, perké di kesti tempə non-tse fanno / / io pentso ke-*kkuello*   3
    no-llo kondannano, perké kuell-era leddəittima difesə / / ke-ssapeva   4
    kello? un anno fà *lui*-à-avutə kuesta ʃkoppola! / / e ʃkusə, io me   5
    vedo uno, ddəà sto ʃkossə, e-ttʃertə, se de iə me voλλo difenderə   6
    aŋk-iə, / / *lui* s-è-ddifesə, ma tʃertə, se-*llui* ditʃev-è nu ʃkertsə, sò 7
    ʃkertsə di fare di kuesti tempi kkuà?'   (F)   8
2) 'e milanesə sà ke anno dettə? à dettə, noi la sera, *l*-à intervistato   1
    non-tso-kki, perké iŋ-kuel momentə / / à ittə, noi la sera milanesi   2
    non uʃʃamo ppiù'   (F)   3
3) 'senta allora, io salivə / / ò-vvisto ke-ssò-ʃʃesi due ddəo vanə / / una 1
    ʃʃarpa bbiaŋka / / una povera vekkiarella kon un altra siŋŋor-   2
    antsianə λi anno rubbato la bborsə di meddzo miliɔne / / siŋŋorə   3
    me kredə? i-ò strillato appriessə nessuno s-è-mmosso, nessuno   4

nessuno nessuno nessuno propriə / / ò-vvisto sol-a vekkiə kə-ddiʃev-   5
aiutatəmə! i-ò strillatə, allora un-tsiŋŋore diʃə, siŋŋora so stia ttsittə 6
pəkké kuelli sono armati! / / e allora io sonə, mə sò-rrimasta kosì-   7
mmale ntern-a-mme! / / k-i-ò-vvistə kuella vekkiə, se l-anno portat-   8
e-nnom-parlava ppiù / / i-ò-ddettə ke-mmaʃkaltsonə! nessun- à   9
readdəitə / / fatʃevə solə, kiamate il tʃento e-ttreditʃi! / / dopo ke   10
kuellə se n-eran-andatə!'   (F)   11

On line 3, fragment 1) abruptly introduces a pronominal expression that has no anaphoric or cataphoric relationship with any definite description (that is with any definite NP) within the text. The referent cannot be recovered co-textually by whoever might be informed of the event to which the speaker alludes, but rather through an 'encyclopedic knowledge'[6] making it possible to interpret 'kuello' (1.3) as 'il gioielliere'. The episode to which the speaker refers is in fact an event which occurred a few days before the interview with the speaker F, in which the victim was an italian footballer who wished to play a trick on a jeweller acquaintance of his; wearing a mask he entered his shop and, threatening him, ordered him to hand over the jewels; the jeweller unaware of the truth had fired a shot, tragically killing his friend.

Still on the basis of a detailed knowledge of the episode, a listener may scan the text and be able to identify 'kuello' (1.3), 'kello' (1.5), 'lui' (1.5) and the first occurence of 'lui' (in 1.7) as coreferent terms. More particularly, in order to interpret the pronoun in 1. 6 in this sense, he should be aware of the fact that the jeweller had already been burgled a year before this event. It should also be pointed out how in 1.7 the referent of the pronoun in the second occurrence of 'lui' changes equally; unexpectedly: here, in fact, the pronoun refers to the footballer and no longer to the jeweller.[7] Naturally, the listener who ignores the event has no possibility, or has much less possibility, of finding his way through the network of references made by the speaker, by correctly identifying the individual whom the person, who produces the text, is thinking of on each occasion. From our point of view, however, the crux of the matter is not whether the listener shares or not the same encyclopedic knowledge as the speaker, but rather the strategies by which the latter introduces the topic of the discourse and organizes a network of references within it. As Lyons maintains, 'the fundamental problem for the

linguist, as far as reference is concerned, is to elucidate and to describe the way in which we use language to draw attention to what we are talking about'.[8] On this point it is generally claimed that the specific modes of reference depend on the 'assumptions' made by the speaker concerning the information about the referent available to the listener.[9] This is a rather delicate point, as we shall see, since the term 'speaker's assumptions' leads us into an area of phenomena that are difficult to examine objectively. Nevertheless, some considerations of a contextual or co-textual nature may allow us to infer something about these mechanisms. As a mere introduction to the question, which will be faced in the following pages, it is sufficient to observe that from the scrutiny of the entire conversation between the interviewer and F there does not emerge any element which can make us think that A has checked the information possessed by the listener about the episode to which he refers; or rather there is no contextual or co-textual data which may allow us to infer that F assumes anything about the listener's knowledge. The entire passage registered in 1) is introduced unexpectedly as an *excursus* with respect to the main topic[10] ('parlò um-milanese e-ddisse kosì / / noįə . . .'). Moreover, even the introduction of the new topic of discourse is described in very little detail ('il fatto di kuesto ragattso k-à fatt-ô ʃkertsə'), as we might expect, since this is a network of new information of which no element had yet been mentioned.

As regards fragment 2), the speaker returns to the preceding topic after the *excursus* which, it should be noted, took up at least 7'.34'' of the conversation. The pronoun occurring in 1. 1 of fragment 2) is a coreferent to the indefinite NP 'um-milanese' in 1. 1 of fragment 1). This means that, due to the considerable amount of time that has elapsed between the occurrence of the NP in question and the coreferent pronoun, and moreover to the fact that the interest of the speaker and listener has been suddenly led from this initial topic to another, the listener in normal circumstances will have some difficulty in identifying the pronominal referent, especially since in the immediate context of the pronoun occurrence in 2) the predicate *ha detto* provides a possible basis for the interpretation. This latter appears in the text with an ellipsis of the thematic subject that is partially recoverable through the verbal inflexion. This recovery, however,

does not really simplify the matters, since the deduced form is still a third person singular pronoun, whose coreferent element still needs to be found. An interpretation with 'e milanesə', which is plausible because a similar NP and the recovered pronoun both occur as subjects of the same predicate *dire*, conflicts, however, with the obviously discordant semantic information concerning the number of the main phrase. If the listener is unable to trace the effective coreferent element in the text (as in fact occurred when the recording was played to several people), the possibility of decoding the sequence comes to be based on the acceptance of a sum of presuppositions[11] which may thus be expressed informally:

'There is a particular Milanese who is the agent of the predicate *dire* and the patient of the predicate *intervistare*.'

This conjunction of propositions could be represented textually as an interpolated sequence, which would thus provide the missing link in the progression of communication.[12]

Moving on to fragment 3), it is clear that here, too, the assigning of the referent to the pronoun in 1.11 is anything but unequivocal: 'kuellə' may refer equally to the burglars, to the old lady and those who helped her or to both the former and the latter at the same time.[13]

A further example is provided by speaker S, who describes a film seen on television a few days earlier as follows:

4)   'kualkosa / / I-altra sera ke à fattə, ke-ssuttʃedevənə tuttə-bbrutti   1
     kkosə a-kkellə llà / / əm-mə rikordə mò / / la moλλe a-nniuiork / /   2
     ke-ssuttʃədevə tuttə / / nom̨-vi sò-ddire kome si kiamavə mò' (S)   3 ;

In this case, too, the speaker uses a pronominal expression inappropriately to refer to an individual he has in mind, without bothering to give the listener further information, that might enable him to understand about *which* individual he is speaking.

Up until now we have observed cases of definite reference which do not satisfy certain traditionally recognized conditions of appropriateness. More problematic are the cases of the fragments of text of speakers O and E, where it is difficult to decide whether the speaker is referring to something definite or indefinite:[14]

5) 'perké tu devi sapere ke-*nnoi* sfollammo in tempo di guerra e i paesi   1
non erano attrettsati per / / rakkoλλerə tuttə stà popolattsjonə   2
skolastika e-kkosə / / pò *rimanemmo tutti kuanti* là / / le skůole   3
a-nnapoli si kịusero per la kụestione delle, tʃoè tʃ-erano o non   4
tʃ-erano, ma intsomma *noi*-eravamo sfollati tuttə'   (O)   5
6) 'e-ppoi iŋkomintʃano n-ata vota indzomma ko-lla replika *kụelle*,   1
tanto vale ke uno no-ll-attʃende'   (E)   2

In 5) the fragment of discourse is an *excursus* with respect to a previously developed topic: the speaker was telling of his schooldays spent, together with his sister, in a village near Naples. To whom does O refer with the 'noi' in 1.1? An interpretation on the basis of the information given earlier on the co-text should assign to the pronoun the referent 'my sister and I [that is speaker O]' or better still perhaps 'my family and I'. Nevertheless the information added later (cf. 'i paesi non erano attrettsati per / / rakkoλλerə tuttə stà popolattsionə skolastika', a sequence which implies more a mass movement of the city towards the outskirts than the moving of a single family) would suggest as a plausible referent '(My family and I) and a large number of Neapolitan families'. In any case, the range of the universal quantifier *tutti* is not at all definite. It may be that the listener, by following the linear progression of the text decodes it by successive adjustments: but a certain amount of indefiniteness probably remains even at the conclusion of the thematic development.[15]

In fragment 6) the speaker is discussing television programmes with which he is not satisfied. The 'kụelle' in 1. 1 could be interpreted roughly as 'the directors of the R.A.I. [Italian Broadcasting Corporation]' but no such phrase nor any other that may substitute it semantically appears in the text.

Some examples from the texts of speakers F, O, B, though superficially different, are similar to the cases examined above. In these, ellipsis of the thematic subject of the utterance occurs. We have already seen, however, that because of the particular structure of Italian, the suppressed information may be recovered partially at least through a pronominal form implicit in the verbal inflexion. Thus, in effect, these cases may be considered as no different from those examined earlier.[16]

7) 'un-altra volta, â-ntiŋŋano / / unə kon um-borsellinə, *ə-ttiratə* il   1
borsellino / / iŋkontrai-una siŋŋora / / diʃe rina, madonna, ma kome   2
stai tu! pallida, kosì, stai tutta nervosə vedi, pari una [?] / / ò-ddetto,   3

senti assuntina, mò-ŋkontrato / / ò-vvisto·ko-λλi okki miei / / *ə-*   4
ttiratə um-borsellinə a una siŋŋora dint-a bborsa e kelle di   5
paλλa'   (F)   6
8) 'e una kosa trovo, ke-kkụeste kose ditʃamo di d-urto anno ppịù   1
effetto se-ssono bbrevi, no / / poi, ripeto, *faʃeva* effetto kụando   2
kuindi voi kụindiʃi anni fà voi non avevate idea di frekụentar-il teatro   3
e allora era veramente un teatro nụovo, un treatrò d-urto, e-tti   4
fatʃeva molto effetto, pekké *erano i primi ke-ffaʃevano* la la kritika   5
politika, faʃevano la satira politika, faʃevano la kritika a-kkụesto,   6
a-kkụello'   (O)   7
9) 'se ti rakkont-una kosa tu non tʃi krederai / / anno fatto tra le varie   1
assuntsịoni, pəkké pò mò iŋ-kụesti ddəorni sikkom-è skattata la   2
leddəe stammatə, allora bisoŋŋavə vederə kụant-eranə le disponib-   3
bilità effettivə, propriə di rụolo, di kosə / / e anno fatto una tʃerta   4
relattsịonə, ke-ppoi-anno mandatə pur-al mio assessorə / / l-altra   5
sera sikkome *diʃə* u stà posta no-ll-ò-letta! stavo traŋkuillə, finii di   6
farə kụello ke-ddovevə farə, bè, mi voλλo leddəerə stà kosə koŋ-   7
kalmə / / anno fatto uŋ-koŋkorso per-assistenti per / / assistenti   8
sanitarie . . . e-ssono rimasti tʃentoditʃassette posti skoperti'   (O)   9
10) Interviewer's question: 'kuali programmi preferiʃʃe?'   1
Speaker's reply: 'guardə, io vedə molto volendịeri il tormentone / /   2
kapito?'   3
Interviewer's question: 'perké?'   4
Speaker's reply: 'perké diʃe le kose veramente / / ke-ssuttʃedono,   5
e-dda kui possiamo sapere intsomma la verità / / io lo vedo molto   6
volentieri, tant-è-vverə ke-mmio maritə l-alta serə mi disse iə devə   7
skriver-a andəelo manna / / ke ò-pperduto mia moλλe'   8
Interviewer's question: 'kome mai?'   9
Speaker's reply: 'perké stò-ssemprə per sentirlə, si / / mi piaʃe / /   10
perké lui diʃe pane al pane, vin-al vinə, à-kkapitə? e-mmi dispiaʃe   11
aŋke ke anno toltə, ke eranə due volt-alla settimana prima / / imveʃ-   12
adessə mi sembra k-è-ssolo il martedì'   13
(Fragment of conversation between the interviewer and speaker B)   14

In fragment 7) no information may be recovered from the ellipsis of the subject in the utterance in line 1 other than the fact that the agent of the predicate *tirare* corresponds to a no better defined individual, to whom F does refer, though not explicitly.[17] Even in this case, no element in the co-text allows for a more articulate interpretation of the reconstructed pronominal form. What the listener may decode in the sequence is 'someone snatched the purse from someone else'. As far as the agent of the process is concerned the interpretation comes about through an indefinite but specific referent: this is a particular, though unidentified person.[18] It should be observed,

moreover, that the 'someone' whose purse has been stolen is not explicitly introduced either: cf. 'unə kon um-borsellinə, à-ttiratə il borsellino', a sequence which reveals a thematic progression with missing links; nevertheless, the occurrence of the paraphrase of this sequence in lines 4-6, a paraphrase giving more detailed information, enables one to identify the person robbed more precisely.

In fragment 8) the central topic of the conversation is a popular cabaret actor. It is interesting to note the variation of number from the subject of 'fatʃeva effetto' to that of 'erano i primi', a variation which prevents coreference. Without a doubt a change in the psychological or thematic (which is the same thing) subject, must have taken place.[19] The fact that there is an ellipsis of the referring expression makes it difficult to identify precisely the psychological entity which the speaker has in mind at the point in which, by changing the subject, he gives an external signal of a deeper change in the cognitive process. Because the text constitutes a network of information, in cases of this kind it is often possible to recover from it clues that enable one to move closer to the identification of that to which the speaker refers. In this instance, for example, the interpretation of the referent of the expression in 1.5 could be 'Dario Fo [the cabaret actor about whom the fragment of text is speaking] and the actors in his company' or 'Dario Fo and those who, like him, appeared in cabaret fifteen years ago'. Phenomena such as this one examined in 8) are, in any case, extremely frequent in colloquial speech. I could quote many other examples from the scrutiny of the examined recordings, but the material is so vast that it is impossible for me to present it here. I shall limit myself to saying that in this case, as in a few others studied, the difficulty in identifying the referent is reduced by the co-text. From this point of view there is a certain amount of analogy between phenomena of this kind and that which Isenberg calls 'impliziter Referenz'.[20] This may be defined as the property of some lexemes within a text to convey the presupposition of the existence of a particular individual and of his involvement in the process expressed by the lexeme itself. To use one of Isenberg's examples, in the text 'Gestern fand eine Hochzeit statt. Die Braut trug dabei ein langes weisses Kleid' Hochzeit contains an implicit reference to Braut. Similarly, in fragment 8) 'teatro

nuovo', 'teatro d-urto' (1.4), where teatro obviously means 'method of acting', presupposes the existence of one or more agents or participants in the process.

Before going on to comment on fragments 9) and 10) may I be allowed to quote a few more interesting examples drawn from the material collected, which seem to underline the affinity of some of the phenomena, with which we are dealing, to implicit reference or to other aspects of the text's semantic cohesion, such as relations of semantic contiguity or sloppy identity coreference.[21]

11) 'fatʃeva ppiù effetto kṳand-era da solo, ke era l-uniko ke-ffatʃeva   1
satire di kostume, di kritika alla sotʃetà e-kkosə / / ora imvetʃe,   2
sikkome tʃi stanno il kabbarè, il bagaλλino, kṳesti kkṳi, allora   3
sekondo me si è-mmolto zvṳotato / / allora per-renderlo ppiù im-   4
peηηato, diʃamo, lo à-ffatto um-pò prolisso'   (O)   5

The subject of the first utterance is 'Dario Fo', while the subject of 'si è-mmolto zvuotato' cannot be derived univocally, it could be either 'Dario Fo' or 'his characteristic vis' or even 'his cultural content'. But such a distinction in many respects is artificial, in the sense that in the spoken language real speakers often do not make such cuts in concrete communication processes. The options which always seem clearcut and possible to the linguist are often copresent to the speaker in the cognitive process underlying the utterance.[22] But what is the referent of the two pronouns in lines 4-5, which are doubtless coreferent? In this case it cannot be 'Dario Fo', who is the agent of the predicates rendere and fare. A satisfactory interpretation could be 'his cultural content'. In this way we would have a pronominal referent that only partially coincides with that of another expression in the text. A rather clear case of sloppy identity coreference is exemplified by the following fragment:

12) 'kompravendita abbiti, di tutto, poltrone, kose ke non-tsi usa ppiù,   1
a-kkambiarlə, a-vvenderlə pə-ppoko intsomma pur-è-bbṳono,   2
sentə ke un-o bbuttə propriə / / o i-à-dda bbuttà, o regalə'   (S)   3

where the dialectal pronominal forms in line 3 sometimes differ not only in number but also in gender from the possible coreferent terms ('abbiti', 'tutto', 'poltrone', 'kose ke non-tsi usa ppiù'). The following examples, on the other hand, would

seem due to semantic contiguity:

13) Interviewer's question: 'e la radio la sente?'   1
    Speaker's reply: 'kuasi mai, perké ne avevo *uno* pikkolino ke-mme   2
    lo portavo dietro e-ssi è-ttutto brutʃato'   (A)   3
14) 'vadə pe-llambià kanalə, trovə un altrə ddɜornalə, radiə e *lo*   4
    speŋgə kompletamentə e-mme nə vad-a-ddormirə'   (Q)   5

It is interesting to note how in 13) the interviewer asks A if he
listens to the radio, meaning 'radio transmissions', while we can
infer from A's reply that the referent of the pronominal forms is
the radio set. In 14) 'lo' seems to be coreferent of 'dd₃ornalə
radiə' but not in the narrow sense, because it cannot be denied
that the speaker is also referring to the set (though this is not
mentioned in the co-text).[23] I believe that these cases show how
the coincidence of denotata, which we shall distinguish with non
experimental methods, is typical of the signifying processes of
real speakers. Such phenomena of semantic expansion and
restriction, which shed light on the dynamics of metaphoric and
metonymic developments, are of some interest to the structure
of my discourse: they point out one aspect of the complex rela-
tionship between referential function and the speaker's 'world'.[24]
    Let us now return to the examination of fragments 9) and 10).
In 9) the segment 'diʃə' in 1.6 contains an allipsis of the them-
atic subject. The reconstructed form of the third person pronoun
could be interpreted by 'my local council clerk', a referent al-
ready given in the text. This hypothesis may be further supported
by the induction of 'quasi-implications' of the kind described by
Bellert 1970:

*An office manager has the right to ask any employee at any time
during office hours to carry out the services for which he is offi-
cially competent*

*The employee should be ready for any order from the office
manager to this specific end*

What the speaker might mean could be therefore: 'I was at ease
(that is I was not required to be ready for any orders), because
the office manager was busy with the backlog of mail and so I
decided to read the report on the hiring of new staff'. It should
be observed that in this way a relationship of coreference, which
is anything but explicit, is also set up between 'stà kosə' (1.7)

and 'una tʃerta relattsionə' (lines 4-5).
    It is interesting to note how in 10) the thematic subject of the
expressions 'eranə due volt-alla settimana', 'è-ssolo il martedì'
may be deduced from the co-text as a 'programma'. The *Tor-
mentone* is in fact a programme. In some ways, though, this
induction is artificial. We have already seen how the real speaker
frequently does not distinguish certain intensional classes from
others. Thus the supposed referent is a conventional construction
valid for the analyst. If it is generally useful to stress this fact, it
is even more so in cases in which, for socio-cultural motives, the
'speaker's world' is even further removed from the analyst's.
    Finally, I should like to quote three more examples of the
deviant use of referring expressions in order to conclude this
exposition of the data. Since reference does not come about by
means of pronouns or forms that may be extrapolated, or forms
which are almost equivalent to those, but through other kinds
of referring expressions, such cases are, to a certain extent,
marginal to our discussion. Nevertheless, I shall quote them
because they seem indicative of some of the general features of
the phenomena of deviant reference.

15)   'l-atro ddɜorno, ke-ssò, ttʃ-era di fantaʃʃ ientsa *kuell*-uomo / / k-era   1
      entrata nel suo stomako stà speʃe di / / di naviʃella spattsiale, non-   2
      tso'   (N)   3
16)   'ke-ssapeva kello? un anno fà lui-à avuto *kuesta* ʃkoppola!'   (F)   1
17)   'pəkké kuesto tittsio kkuà è-ppiù kome dire? / / *stu* nikola intsom-   1
      ma è-mmolto spontaneo, kome dire? è um-papà di tutti kuanti,   2
      è-kkiaro?'   (C)   3

In 15) and 16) we have definite descriptions used inappropriately.
In 15) the expression 'kuell-uomo / / k-era entrata nel suo
stomako stà speʃe di / / di naviʃella spattsiale' not only reveals a
determinative form for a referent unidentifiable through previous
textual information,[25] but it introduces the referent itself *ex
abrupto*, without situating it in a broader, and, so to speak,
'preparatory' information network: the speaker might have speci-
fied, for example, that he was referring to a character in a film.
Nevertheless, we should not let ourselves be led astray by the
viewpoint of a standard type of organization of discourse. As we
shall see more clearly later, the organization of the real speaker's
discourse may point to a cognitive process, influenced in different
ways by factors of an affective nature. It is possible that in the

present case the speaker introduces that particular referent with no appropriate textual accompaniment, because it is that which struck him most about the film and, as such, he considers it immediately relevant to the communication into which it may be introduced by itself, with no further mention of spatio-temporal circumstances. The fact is that the speaker already has a full set of spatio-temporal circumstances for this particular referent: the use of a determinative-ostensive form such as *quello* reveals that he is indicating a referent that is situated in his personal spatio-temporal world. The use of a demonstrative also occurs in cases 16) and 17), where it is equally associated with a deviant information structure. In 16), which is a sequence from the longer fragment 1), the NP 'kꭒesta ʃkoppola' is not specified further (for example, by a relative clause determining with which 'ʃkoppola' he is dealing [*scoppola* is a Neapolitan term meaning a 'blow', both physically and metaphorically]). The only form of determination is constituted by the occurrence of the demonstrative and, as we have observed, it is a kind of determination which refers back to a subjective modality of the speaker, rather than to the deictic context. The same applies to no. 17) where the demonstrative (in the contracted form *stu*) occurs with a proper noun that is introduced equally *ex abrupto*. The speaker is talking about an announcer with a small private radio station (cf. 'kꭒesto tittsꭐo kkꭒà in 1. 1). Suddenly, however, he refers to him by a different expression, by his own name, without being able to assume in any way that the listener might know of the convention that allows him to consider 'nikola' and 'kꭒesto tittsꭐo kkꭒà' as coreferent expressions.

3.   Up until now I have merely laid out and commented textually on a certain amount of data at my disposal. As has been noted, the basic problem is that of the 'deviant' use of referring expressions; a problem to which I have attempted to associate a number of apparently heterogeneous phenomena, some of which seem to spill over into the realm of already exemplified cases (implicit reference, coreference by semantic contiguity, sloppy identity coreference). By focussing on a problem such as that of the deviant use of referring expressions, it is not my intention to

limit its range to the sphere of performance. My point of view on the question is that the phenomenon is based on a well-defined, systematic nature, which I shall deal with shortly.

Before going on to discuss this hypothesis, it will be necessary to place the facts described within a theoretical framework; this leads us to face the conceptual crux of reference, particularly concerning what Bar-Hillel terms 'indexical expressions'. By approaching it in this way, I am already implicitly assuming that the problem at hand is essentially theoretical and as such I am assigning *use* a greater importance in the study of linguistic phenomena than that given it some ten years ago, when Strawson was able to write: 'logicians have failed to notice that problems of use are wider than problems of analysis and meaning'.[26]

For the purpose of exposition, since the question has various aspects, I shall pretend that it may be divided roughly into a number of sub-problems such as that of the logical concept of reference, the more specifically linguistic one, and the functional and socio-linguistic one. This will also allow me to organize my discussion of the rather ample bibliography on the subject, though I am well aware that I will not give an exhaustive panorama of it.[27]

It has already been mentioned (cf. note 7) that reference is an action carried out by the speaker and not a feature of linguistic expressions as such. By means of this action, the speaker gathers together or introduces into the universe-of-discourse particular entities, or rather their intensional correlates,[28] identifying them with instruments of a particular kind (linguistic instruments, such as definite NP, pronouns, proper nouns and/or non-linguistic instruments such as gestures) as that about which he is going to say something. This is what Strawson has to say on the matter:

'One of the main purposes for which we use language is the purpose of stating fact about things and persons and events. If we want to fulfil this purpose, we must have some way of forestalling the question, "What (who, which one) are you talking about?" as well as the question, "What are you saying about it (him, her)?" The task for forestalling the first question is the referring (or identifying) task. The task of forestalling the second is the attributive (or descriptive or classificatory or ascriptive) task.'[29]

The basic requirement for carrying out an appropriate reference (that which Searle terms 'fully completed')[30] is that the speaker should guarantee the uniqueness of the identification to his

audience. This does not mean that a single entity is identified as belonging to the class defined by the particular expression used,[31] but that the listener should be able to identify which individual, among those belonging to the class defined, has actually been selected by the speaker in order to complete his utterance.[32] This result is made possible by a series of requirements summed up under the heading of 'context' of utterance. Strawson summarizes them as follows:

'By "context", I mean, at least, the time, the place, the situation, the identity of the speaker, the subjects which form the immediate focus of interest, and the personal histories of both the speaker and those he is addressing.'[33]

Clearly, there is some hestitation in defining the contextual requirements precisely, or rather, in providing a finite list which accounts for them in a necessary and sufficient manner. In Bar-Hillel, on the other hand, we find a clear admission of the problem's difficulties:

'I have left the central concept of this paper, namely *pragmatic context*, in a rather thorough vagueness, and this for the very simple reason that I see no clear way to reduce this vagueness at the moment . . . The vagueness in which I left the expression "pragmatic context" is partly due to the fact that its reference is often intrinsically vague itself.'[34]

The axiom of the referent's identification and the concept of the pragmatic context of reference provides us with the opportunity to stress one of the basic positions present in the logical bibliography on the subject which, in the light of the phenomena described, does not seem capable of characterizing a great number of phenomena of reference.

To begin with the first point, it is generally assumed that the speaker's aim in referring to something is to ensure that his audience understands the object that he 'has in mind'. Limiting ourselves to the work of Strawson and Donnellan, the examination of a number of passages concerning the use of definite descriptions appears to be rather significant:

'The purpose of using the description is to get the audience to pick out or think of the right thing or person'.[35]

'The contrast with such a use of the sentence .[i.e. "Smith's murderer is insane", in which the definite description "Smith's murderer" is used attributively] is one of those situations in which we expect and intend our audience to realize whom we have in mind when we speak of Smith's murderer and, most importantly, to know that it is this person about whom we are going to say something.'[36]

In this passage Donnellan is opposing the attributive use and the referential use of definite descriptions. A little earlier, while on the same subject, he had maintained:

'In the first case [i.e. in the attributive use] the definite description might be said to occur essentially, for the speaker wishes to assert something about whatever or whoever fits that description; but in the referential use the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job – calling attention to a person or thing.'[37]

let us also consider the following statements:

'Normally a person tries to describe correctly what he wants to refer to because normally this is the best way to get his audience to recognize what he is referring to.'[38]

'Now, whenever a man uses any expression, the presumption is that he thinks he is using it correctly: so when he uses the expression, 'the such-and-such', in a uniquely referring way, the presumption is that he thinks both that there is *some* individual of that species, and that the context of use will sufficiently determine which one he has in mind.'[39]

These statements concerning definite descriptions may also be extended to other kinds of singular logical subjects occurring in referring expressions, or rather to pronouns and proper nouns, admitting that these have a different relationship to the context when functioning as uniquely referring expressions.[40]

What is striking in the passages quoted is that it is almost taken for granted that a general characteristic of the action 'to refer to' is 1) the fact that the speaker *intends* to ensure that his audience has correctly understood or identified the referent, and 2) the fact that the speaker presupposes (in a pre-theoretic meaning of the term as 'assumes' or 'presumes') that the conditions for the identification exist within the context ('context' also meaning the listener's specific knowledge assumed by him). These two closely interrelated terms are developed further by Strawson 1964, especially point 2), concerning the 'historical or geographical

knowledge' more or less shared by speaker and audience.[41] Here Strawson is speaking of two common places or 'platitudes' which preside over the functioning of colloquial speech, the 'Principle of the Presumption of Ignorance' and the 'Principle of the Presumption of Knowledge':

'Just as we might say that it could not be true of a speaker that he intended to *inform* an audience of some particular point unless he presumed their ignorance of that point, so we might often say that it could not be true of a speaker that he intended to *inform* an audience of just that particular point unless he presumed in his audience certain empirical knowledge.'[42]

It is interesting to note that in this study Strawson makes a few slight additions to assumptions 1), which, however, are of some interest to our point of view:

'One, perhaps the primary, but not of course the only, purpose of *assertive* discourse is to give information to an audience of some kind, viz. one's listener or listeners or reader or readers.'[43]

Though the interest of the passage lies in the more prudent affirmation of the significant value of the informative aim of discourse, it lies especially in the move towards a functional perspective of analysis, even if this is merely sketched, which appears in the qualification of discourse as 'assertive'.[44]

In any case, if we confront assumptions 1) and 2) with our own data, we can observed that both are compromised. For the most part the referring expressions that occur are pronominal. From a strictly linguistic viewpoint, however, these elements may function as referring expressions either acting deictically or as anaphoric forms.[45] Yet we have observed that in the fragments of text examined the pronouns are neither deictic nor anaphoric (or cataphoric) elements. At this point it seems clear that, in our case, the majority of contextual requirements generally considered relevant are missing. Even a possible condition such as the interlocutors knowing each other's personal history is not valid because these met for the first time during the interviews. Neither does it seem that the expression in question occurs in the fulcra of discourse which, if I correctly understand what Strawson means by this, should represent the maximum points of involvement of both the speaker and listener during the conversation; it is this involvement which should ensure that

the listener correctly identifies the referent. It might be noted rather that these expressions occur in sequences of discourse in which the speaker is involved emotionally or, to put it more generically, pays attention. This observation is perhaps the one which puts us on the right track to a solution of the problem. Rather than to the fulcrum of the discourse, one might refer to what Lyons calls the 'salience' of the referent:

'What logicians commonly refer to as the universe-of-discourse is not simply an unstructured set of potential referents, each of which is equally accessible throughout a text or conversation. Some of the potential referents are more salient than others.'[46]

When, in the speech situation, a particular referent is salient, or emotionally or cognitively relevant, it may be expressed by pronominal occurrences, even if the contextual conditions required for their appropriate use do not exist. Nevertheless, the examples of this provided by Lyons are not analogous to ours. The example drawn from Isard:

18)   *Be careful, he might bite you*

spoken by the zoo-keeper to a small boy who is too close to the lion's cage, as Lyon himself admits, a case of deictic reference. More interesting is the following example:

19)   *I was terribly upset to hear the news: I only saw her last week*

spoken by a friend to a person whose wife has just died. Lyons rightly observes that in these cases there is no need to specify to what news one is referring or what is the referent of *she*: the pronoun refers to the person who, in the particular circumstance, is the most salient and as such has no need to have already been mentioned or to be physically present in the speech situation.[47] In this example, the referent's salience is mainly emotional, but it would be easy to find examples of a mainly cognitive salience of the referent. In fact, I came across several cases of this kind in normal conversation. To give but one example, I happened to be present during a speech event between two colleagues at a computer centre. The two were working together on a project and a few days earlier had had to face the problem of finding a mistake in a programme that did not work. At the time of the speech event they were seeing each other again after a few days:

20) 'l-ò-ttrovato!' (1st colleague)
   'e-ddov-era?' (2nd colleague)

and it is clear that a successful communication is based precisely on a mainly cognitive salience of the referent ('the mistake').

Nevertheless, both in Lyons' example and in the one just quoted, salience is based on an intersubjective agreement, not only because in both cases speakers share a common piece of knowledge, but also because the referent is the most relevant *for both* in the course of the interaction. This does not apply to the phenomena that concern us, for which it is impossible to speak about an intersubjective agreement between speaker and listener for the simple reason that these are functionally different speech events, they are cases of the speaker's narrating his own subjective experience. Thus it would be more correct to speak of a salience of the referent for the speaker, which is confirmed, in fact, by the presence of such paralinguistic features as an excited, polemical or nostalgic intonation in the utterances in which the phenomenon appears.

At this point, let us again ask ourselves whether it is possible to maintain that the speakers examined assume that their listeners have the specific identifying knowledge which enables them to recognize the object that they have in mind. If our judgements were to be based on traditional criteria, like the amount of information given by the speaker to specify about whom (or what) he is speaking, we should have to conclude that this object is known to the listener because the information given by the speaker is scarce.[48] If we again consider all the examples of the phenomenon, we may note that this scarcity of information may be observed not only in the use of pronouns (or even in the ellipsis of the subject), where we should have expected a definite description, but also in the use of definite descriptions themselves: cf. 'kuesto ragattso k-à fatt-o ʃkertsə', an expression which occurs at the introduction of a new topic as a reference to the footballer who had been the protagonist of an event that is much too complicated to be summarized by 'à fatt-o ʃkertsə'; cf. also 'lui-à avuto kuesta ʃkoppola', where the expression 'kuesta ʃkoppola' should point to the fact that the jeweller had been burgled a year before. The same scarcity of information is to be found, as will be recalled, in the use of a proper noun (cf.

'stu nikola') without the speaker's having any basis for assuming that the listener knows the *ad hoc* convention for identifying the individual.

In these cases we have observed rather that the only form of determination was to be found in a particular use of the demonstrative deixis, which reveals a subjective modality of the speaker with respect to the referent. This evidence points to the fact that the scarcity of information is the effect of a 'restricted code' rather than that of the 'presupposition' by the speakers that the audience already has specific identifying knowledge. Obviously both hypotheses are difficult to 'verify' since their objects are intentions, assumptions, and so on. We might assume, for instance, that speaker A presumes that his audience is aware of the news event because of the sensation it caused and the fact that it occurred just before the time of the interview. We may also assume that speaker I presumes that his interlocutors know that the speaker on the programme is called Nicola. In this way we may adopt assumption 2) as a hypothesis; but it is a short step from here to accepting assumption 1). Indeed there is a certain circularity implicit in the manner in which 1) and 2) are used: the one refers to the other without the factual evidence finding a pivot. If one maintains that the speaker intends the listener to correctly identify what he has in mind, there is no sense in then maintaining that he does not take the necessary precautions to ensure this result (it is of little importance whether he effectively ensures this or not, the point is that he should *believe* that he has in some way ensured it). Similarly, if the speaker uses a particular referring expression and he assumes that the contextual requirements for comprehension exist, there is no sense in maintaining that he does not wish comprehension to take place (unless, of course, there is some constraint outside his own will). Obviously intentions, assumptions, beliefs cannot be treated in the same manner as other objects of research.

This point, however, deserves to be discussed in more detail since through it there pass some important methodological questions of the most recent semantic investigation. We in fact find a tendency to include within the semantic interpretation of a sentence a set of pragmatic factors among which, of particular interest to our standpoint, are the so-called 'pragmatic presuppositions', also defined as 'propositional attitudes', that

express or describe the speaker's modalities (hopes, knowledge, beliefs, efforts, and so on)[49] These presuppositions may be represented as propositions implicitly assumed by the speaker before making an utterance. Nevertheless, when it is maintained that a particular sentence presupposes a particular propositional attitude of the type 'the speaker believes that', no assumption is made as to the correspondence between the belief revealed *externally* by the speaker and his effective state of mind. As far as we are concerned in considering the presupposition:

'The speaker assumes that the listener has the knowledge that enables him to identify the referent uniquely'

it is not 'necessary' for the speaker to actually make any assumptions about the listener's mental attitudes. The fact is that he acts *as though* he makes them.[50] This approach is justified by the observation that even when one invokes a particular intersubjective agreement about the truth of someone's specific belief or assumption, such a 'public criterion' never leads us beyond the identification of a 'possible' state of affairs.[51] To our ends, therefore, it would seem that more conclusive considerations might be based on other kinds of external criteria. Altough the speakers examined behave *as though* they actually make the assumption formulated earlier, there is some evidence to make us think that this is not true. This evidence is strictly linguistic and concerns the form of the speaker's communication. In this way, the fact that the speakers examined reveal characteristics of a 'restricted code' may lead us to conclude that the deviant use of referring expressions is not due to a mistaken presupposition but, as we shall observe later, to a differentiation in their grammar that is not only structural but also functional.[52]

Let us now consider how logico-philosophical studies have treated the problem of reference-failure. Strawson 1964 examines cases of reference-failure but always from the viewpoint of the speaker's intentions and presuppositions. The possibility is contemplated in which the speaker believes incorrectly that the audience shares particular knowledge, in which the speaker does not use an appropriate expression to refer to entities which are actually known to the audience (inappropriate not in the sense that they are not sufficiently descriptive or informative, but in the sense that they may lead to misunderstandings: for example

the expression 'England' referring to Great Britain, or the 'Premier of the United States' referring to President Kennedy), including the case in which no entity corresponds to that to which the speaker believes he is referring (the speaker's and/or audience's identifying knowledge is merely a false belief), or even the case in which the speaker uses a particular referring expression, even though he knows that no entity corresponds to it, in order to trick the audience.[53]

More interesting, however, is the theoretical framework outlined by Bar-Hillel 1954 for the problem of communicative misfunctions relative to the use of indexical expressions:

'Recipients of indexial communication will not always be able to know its original context and hence not be able to find the statement to which the received sentence, paired with its context, is logically equivalent. Interesting and important problems with regard to successful or unsuccessful communication are certain to arise.'[54]

Later on he identifies as the crux of indexical communication the fact that the context, without which no reference nor truth-value may be assigned to a sentence-token,[55] is not necessarily understood in the same way by a speaker and a listener. The amount of information that one needs to know in order to understand the reference of a particular sentence-token clearly varies from case to case just as, and this is perhaps the most interesting point, one cannot speak of the absolute 'comprehension' of a sentence. There are rather different levels of comprehension: a 'strong' comprehension equivalent to 'understanding in the manner intended by the addresser', a weaker comprehension in which the listener does not have at his disposal all the information that the speaker of a particular sentence-token has. An example of this kind might be provided by the understanding of the sentence-token *I am hungry* as 'at a particular moment someone is hungry'. Even mistaken comprehension may constitute a kind of comprehension that is even weaker than the former:

'Somebody who, for some reason or for no reason, took M to be the producer of a token of (3) [i.e. of *I am hungry*] whereas this token was produced by N, will still have 'understood' this token.'[56]

Obviously the degree of dependence on the context of sentences containing indexical expressions is greater compared to that of

sentences not containing such expressions, so that the listener in these cases needs a greater amount of information in order to understand the token in the strong sense. The analysis continues with another interesting observation from the viewpoint of reference-failure. According to Bar-Hillel, the basic danger of a indexical communication consists in the fact that:

'The dependence upon pragmatic context might sometimes be forgotten so that the recipient will tend to supplement unconsciously some context, but not the intended one, to the received expression-token and so get the impression of having received a statement-token with no special problems of reference.'[57]

In the light of these comments we shall now attempt to carry out a semantic analysis of the communicative misfunctions, which egocentric reference may produce.

4.   The time has come to undertake a more specifically linguistic analysis of the question of the deviant referential use of indexical expressions. We shall concern ourselves only with pronouns here. It has already been observed that in the examples examined these may not be considered as either deictic nor anaphoric forms. I would now like to examine this assumption in more detail as well as some of the consequences derived from it.

The most widely accepted concept of deixis is that which interprets particular characteristic functions on the basis of 'the spatio-temporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance',[58] taking this latter as a concrete, physical situation.[59] It is not by chance that the concept of deixis is traditionally likened to that of ostension. In fact, both the concept of deixis and that of ostension refer to the idea of identifying something by pointing to it. In this sense it is clear that we cannot consider the pronominal expressions occurring in the fragments of text examined as deictic, unless of course we assign a psychological, 'mental' value to the spatio-temporal context of the speech situation. If in fact we interpret this context in the way it is represented by the participants in the conversation, it is possible to account not only for the well-known fact that the same context is often interpreted in different ways by the speakers,

but also for the fact that there is a certain amount of subjectivity which cannot be eliminated from the act of utterance and in which the speaker's cognitive and emotional world may be perceived: a person, a thing, an event may not be physically present in the context of utterance, yet it might be present in a significant, 'salient' manner in the cognitive process linked indissolubly to utterance. By stating this, of course, we do not intend to diminish the eminently social, intersubjective nature of communication. The salient entity and the state of affairs into which this fits in the speaker's world may be communicated to the audience, as indeed they often are, by means of physico-acoustic signals. Otherwise we could not account for the frequent success of normal communication. Nevertheless, it is true that alongside successful communicative results, there occur, more often than the theoretical linguist would like to believe, phenomena of communicative misfunction in which what the speaker says is not understood by the listener, or only partially understood. From this view-point natural communication is not an optimum information network where nothing is lost, as one might be led to believe by adopting a model of communication based on the information theory. This model, elaborated principally for the study of the transmission of information[60] between non-human systems, does not normally foresee a type of information loss different from that determined by the channel: once the effect of the medium through which the transmission takes place is minimized, it may be said that the information emitted by the source is equal to the information that reaches the receiving system. If, however, we closely observe the structure of ordinary conversation, we realize that the most characteristic and most interesting type of information loss is not determined by the channel (misfunctions due to the channel are trivial in this phenomenology), but by the emitting and receiving systems themselves and, complementarily, by the nature of the 'code'. Using an effective metaphor, one might say that the process of communication cannot be represented as an act of target-firing in which two people must alternatively hit the other's target and in which each of the two actually takes aim and hits the other's target in the centre. If anything, the process could be considered as an alternation of firing and hitting, adjusting the aim on each occasion: I am thinking of the listener's interventions requesting

clarification, additions, and so on, which provide the characteristic communicative structure of natural conversation. These interventions are much more frequent than one might think. The motives requiring the listener to recover information may be of various kinds. The non-systematic observations made recently on fragments of conversation have nevertheless convinced me all the more that an interesting portion of these cases can be explained precisely by an 'egocentric' referential function on the part of the speaker.

To return now to the question of deixis, the crux of the matter is whether it is possible, while still considering the context in psychological terms, to extend the concept of deixis in order to justify this type of reference in which there is no intersubjective agreement between speaker and listener.

A question in some ways analogous is reproposed when we consider the phenomenon from a textual viewpoint which is really an aspect derived from the deictic viewpoint.[61] The traditional analysis of pronominal occurrences within a text places these in a relationship of coreference either to a preceding NP or to a subsequent NP, whenever their referent cannot be identified by means of deixis.[62] In this case then the referent cannot be discovered by an immediate association of the linguistic unity to the extralinguistic context but through the mediation of a NP that has already occurred or that will be mentioned later,[63] and whose referent is also that of the pronoun. Thus the pronoun is only a substitute form.[64] What is interesting, on examining the literature on the topic, is that the possibility of a pronominal occurrence whose referent is not identifiable through the co-text (once the possibility of deictic reference has been excluded) is never admitted. Thus, for example, Isenberg maintains that in German the definite pronouns must always be directly identifiable.[65] In the same way an utterance such as *Er kommte heute* with no textual introduction is considered as 'möglicherweise unakzeptabel' by Lang.[66] It should be noted that the identifiability of the pronominal referent through the co-text does not necessarily call for the existence of the relationship of coreference between the *substituens* and *substituendum*,[67] as in the case of Karttunen's famous example:

21)   *The man who gave his paycheck to his wife was wiser than the man who gave it to his mistress*

where *it* does not refer to any previously mentioned entity; there is an identity of denotata, but not of referents (*it* stands for *paycheck*) which is, nevertheless, enough to recover the pronoun's referent.

Now, however, the data in our possession pose some problems as far as the classic textual treatment of pronominal forms is concerned. Nevertheless other problems of a more general nature arise. One of the most relevant of these is the identification of units that can be considered 'texts' within ordinary conversation. A pronoun that apparently has no antecedent in the co-text formed by the immediate sequence of conversation, may have one in a wider conversation sequence which includes speech-acts from two hours earlier, two days earlier, and so on. This is quite legitimate if we accept the idea that often the possibility of beginning a conversation by a pronoun whose referent is not to be found in the speech situation depends on the referent's salience for the speakers and on the fact that this has most likely already been mentioned, or anyway has been the object of discourse, in some previous interaction. What then does co-text mean in this case?[68] To take another one of our examples, it will be recalled that in one case the antecedent of a pronoun preceded it in the conversation by at least 7 minutes and 34 seconds. In the case in question we had considered the fact that the co-text was made up of the entire conversation, but it is also true that we wondered whether this concept of co-text had any real operative value in the process of decoding by the listener: was the latter really able to understand the relationship between the occurrence of that pronoun and a NP introduced into the universe-of-discourse 7 minutes and 34 seconds earlier? Obviously, the interest in this question does not lie so much in the case at hand, but rather in the possibility of setting up a relationship between the occurrence of the indexes realized by full forms and that of the coreferent indexes realized by substitute forms. Obviously, one may consider that the ability to understand textual referents depends not only on this factor but on others too, such as the listener's interest or attention for the topic of discourse with which the conversation is concerned.

A further observation requires Isenberg's statement according to which a sentence such as:

22) *Gestern haben mich Hans und Peter besucht. Er war sehr freundlich zu mir*

is deviant, because the referent of *er* is not directly identifiable.[69] Nevertheless, this phenomenon of imprecise identification is much more frequent in spoken language than might be believed. Thus once again these considerations lead us to the evidence of the link between reference and the speaker's world. The examples of deviant reference show in different ways how both the speech situation and the universe-of-discourse bring us back in the final analysis to a concept like that of the speaker's 'world'. The problem that is posed, therefore, is that of observing how intersubjective agreement is created in cases of 'strong' understanding and how a 'weak' type of understanding is possible when the speaker's world and the listener's world diverge. We shall see that it is possible to solve this problem by reformulating the intuitive concept of speaker's (or listener's) 'world' as that of the 'model of the world' or the 'possible world'.

We should first of all note that the interpretation of the sentence corresponding to a particular utterance is determined both by its meaning and by the 'point of reference' associated with each of its individual parts. In sentences containing pronominal expressions, the interpretation of these latter (and thus that of the sentence as a whole) is almost entirely determined by the point of reference associated with them. The more noticeably *context dependent* nature of the so-called indexical expressions consists in this, and this also means that the extension of a pronoun is for the most part determined by the value of the point of reference: denotation and reference are closely linked in this kind of expression. The 'point of reference' (or 'index' in Montague's terms) is defined as 'the set . . . of all complexes of relevant aspects of possible context of use'[70] and can be represented formally as an n-ple of elements. Of particular interest to our standpoint is Lewis' representation (1972), according to which the point of reference is an n-ple (with n = 8) of elements, different from the meaning, which help determine the extension of a term. These are the eight coordinates of the n-ple:

'The first coordinate is a possible world, the second coordinate is a moment of time, the third coordinate is a place, the fourth coordinate is a person (or other creature capable of being a speaker), the fifth coordinate is a set of persons (or other creatures capable of being an audience), the sixth

coordinate is a set (possibly empty) of concrete things capable of being pointed at, the seventh coordinate is a segment of discourse, and the eighth coordinate is an infinite set of things.'[71]

Among Lewis's contextual coordinates, the 'indicated-object coordinate' and the 'previous discourse coordinate' are those which typically preside over a respectively ostensive and textual interpretation of pronominal forms. It must be noted here and in future that by 'pronominal forms', I mean those of the 3rd person. As far as first and second person pronominal forms are concerned, the coordinates 'speaker' and 'listener' are the relevant ones. Clearly, by considering the coordinates 'indicated-object' and 'previous discourse' as fundamental in determining the extension of third person pronominal variables, Lewis adheres to the traditional view that third person pronouns may be interpreted either deictically or textually. At this point we may reformulate our problem of the inappropriate use of pronominal expressions, by asking ourselves which of Lewis' eight coordinates might determine the extension in such cases. Indeed, neither the textual nor the ostensive coordinate may suffice. Nevertheless, in the same work, Lewis returns to the subject, introducing a further coordinate, which he terms 'prominent-objects':

'An object may be prominent because it is nearby, or pointed at, or mentioned; *but none of these is a necessary condition of contextual prominence.*'[72]

This coordinate is related to such mental factors as 'the speaker's expectation regarding the things he is likely to bring to the attention of his audience',[73] but a similar formulation seems quite vague (could it coincide with the notion of 'salience' with which we have already dealt?) and hardly operative from our viewpoint. We could, of course, try to make the nature of this coordinate more precise by adapting it to our case. Nevertheless, other alternatives may be conceived within Lewis' model. One might, for example, give a broader formulation to the coordinate 'indicated-object' in order to include not only an 'exocentric' ostension but also an 'endocentric' one, which amounts to accepting a psychological interpretation of the deictic context. Another solution could be to consider the contextual coordinates as irrelevant in determining the extension of pronominal variables used in a deviant manner, but as relevant that which Lewis calls

the 'possible world coordinate' and the 'assignment coordinate'. Before moving on to investigate this further hypothesis, I should like to point out, incidentally, that the difficulty in finding the right coordinates for determining the extension of pronouns used inappropriately is due in part to an aspect of third person pronouns, often underlined by logicians and linguists. The point of reference of first and second person pronouns is determined immediately by the structure of the communicative situation which, because it is a dialogue, calls for a speaker and a listener, an I and a you. This is not the case for 3rd person pronouns that do not refer to any constituent element of the speech situation: it is for this reason that their conditions of use are not easy to define in a rigorous manner.[74]

To return now to the hypothesis in discussion, we may observe that the coordinate 'assignment' is that which determines the value (or extension) of the terms that can occur as free variables in propositions of the form 'Fx'. The coordinate 'assignment' is in fact an infinite sequence of objects, each of which may constitute the value of such a variable. A single function from points of reference to extensions then defines the intension of such a variable.[75] It is the point of reference that determines which of the extensions of the variable is the one actually selected. The value of the point of reference, however, in cases of the type examined, seems to be defined by the coordinate 'possible world', if we assume that the concept of speaker's 'world' may be reformulated as that of 'possible world' or 'model' of the real world. The speaker's 'world' may be viewed as one of the infinite states of affairs conceivable or imaginable; it may be termed a 'model' of the real world, not in the sense that the set of objects and the set of relationships defined by this 'represent' the real world, but, perhaps, in the sense that such sets may generate the instructions for the construction of representations alternative to those of the real world. In this way we may justify more precisely our initial assumption that the referent of a pronominal expression is an intensional object, that is an object whose identity is contingent: it depends on the possible world specified as the nth coordinate of its point of reference.

Let us now move to a more detailed analysis of the phenomenon as a misfunction in communication. The use of pronouns in a way that is detached from the intersubjective context of

communication, from the speaker's viewpoint, refers to the assignment of a particular object to every free variable occurring in the logico-semantic structure of the sentence. At the moment in which he makes a particular utterance, his semantic representation of the corresponding sentence is obviously full. This is not the case for the listener who, faced with an egocentric reference, is in one of the following situations:

1) He decodes the utterance by assigning the same extensional object, and to some extent the same intensional object, to the pronominal variable.
2) He decodes the utterance by assigning an extensional individual different from that of the speaker to the pronominal variable.
3) He decodes the utterance by assigning the interpretation 'someone I don't know which particular individual' to the pronominal variable.

I should like to point out first of all that the occurrence of one of these three cases does not depend exclusively on whether or not the listener shares the speaker's knowledge. Such aspects as attention, emotional involvement and, more generally, the size of the intersection between speaker's world and listener's world are no less decisive as the former in obtaining one result rather than another. In situation 1), which we might define as 'almost' full understanding, the difference between the speaker's semantic representation of the sentence and the listener's semantic representation of the sentence lies (probably) in the intensional representation of the referent. Moreover it is well known that these differences exist in all human communicative processes: a general feature of human communication is that the content of a message cannot be understood by the addressee in a way that is *exactly identical* to that represented by the addresser, if only for trivial differences. For example I could represent (remember) the object in question by accessory features different from those by which the addresser represents (remember) it: I could imagine that a particular person has blue eyes, while the speaker imagines him with dark eyes. Situation 1), in all events, may be considered as a case of 'strong' understanding.

Situation 2) is that which we may define as one of misunderstanding or erroneous comprehension. The listener understands

that that about which something is being predicated is the jth individual of the extensional world (supposing that we may think of such individuals as numbered on a list), while that about which the speaker is thinking is the kth individual (where j ≠ k). Naturally the most obvious explanation of this case is that the listener does not share the speaker's knowledge which would allow him to understand the utterance in the 'strong' sense. More interesting, however, are the situations in which, despite the fact that the listener shares a particular network of knowledge with the speaker, he does not put it into action in the decoding process, but puts another into action so as to fill the variable with a different object from that to which the speaker was referring. Since this subject would require much more space than I can devote to it here, I shall limit myself to observing that the data I collected on this point seems to suggest a pre-eminence in decoding of such factors as the listener's emotional involvement, motivation, etc. compared to a particular network of experience.

Situation 3), which we may define as one of 'weak' understanding, is no less interesting. While the speaker has in any case a definite representation of the object to which he refers, the listener is not in the same position. His interpretation obviously depends on the presence of other linguistic information. For example, if the referent is the subject of an agentive predicate requiring the feature [+ human] of the actor, he can recover the information that a human being is being spoken about. Of particular interest is the case in which there is a considerable difference between the amount of information available to the speaker A and the listener when the former recounts the episode of the robbery he saw in the street. In this case, the speaker's knowledge of the individual to whom she refers is minimal: it is based (presumably) on the fact that she saw him for a few minutes in the street while the robbery was taking place. Yet, compared to the listener, the speaker doubtless has more information, even though it is probable that at the time in which she is recounting the event, some has been lost. In any event, she would be able to say (approximately) whether that particular individual was young or old, tall or short, and so on, while the listener can only understand that 'someone, a no better identified individual, snatched the purse'.

5. Let us now consider the effects of the inappropriate use of pronominal expressions on the organization of communication. In what way does the functional and information structure[76] of utterances in which the phenomenon occurs take shape? As far as the latter is concerned, it should be noted that the inappropriate pronominal expressions do not occur with a contrastive emphasis in utterances. It is well known that in many natural languages a relationship exists between information 'focus' and emphasis, which carries out a communicative function, by which an acoustic pre-eminence accompanies a pre-eminence of information.[77] According to Halliday:

'Information focus is one kind of emphasis, that whereby the speaker marks out a part (which may be the whole) of a message block as that which he wishes to be interpreted as informative. What is focal is "new" information, not in the sense that it cannot have been previously mentioned, although it is often the case that it has not been, but in the sense that the speaker presents it as not being recoverable from the preceding discourse.'[78]

Although the terms 'given' and 'new' are rather inadequate, it is possible to maintain, once the preceding precision has been made, that the informative structure is a function of the 'given' and the 'new'.[79] Compared to the criterion of information 'focus', these expressions therefore behave as non-focal, or as thematic.[80] In fact, in unmarked cases the information focus does not fall on the theme but on the rheme, although it is not necessarily to be extended to the entire rhematic expression.[81] For other reasons, however, the preceding conclusion appears controversial. The traditional identification of theme with 'given' and rheme with 'new' is doubtless reductive.[82] If we were to apply this criterion, admitting the thematicity of our expressions, since the 'given' is more precisely that which the speaker *considers* as such in the situation or in the universe-of-discourse, we should have to conclude that, after all, the 'error' that we are concerned with consists in the speaker's mistaken assumption that his listeners have the elements to correctly identify the referent he has in mind. Firbas maintains that the criterion of the information known and unknown, though not mechanically determining the thematic structure, is relevant for determining how far a sentence is contextually dependent. This divides the constituents of the sentence into elements that convey the known information, that recoverable from the context, and elements

that convey the unknown information, independent of the context. The former are always thematic.[83] Interesting in this sense are Firbas' comments on a sentence that marks a beginning of a narration:

23)   *U Jirsů bodou mít svatbu* (At the Jirsas there will be a wedding)

This sentence, which may be very common as an utterance in everyday conversation, would probably be heard in a dialogue 'between people who are closely related by mode of life and experience and can draw from vast stores of common knowledge'.[84] This depends on the context because the first element *U Jirsů* (locative) 'may be argued to convey a piece of information well known to both the speaker and to the hearer, because belonging to the stock of their common knowledge'.[85] In Firbas' terms, U *Jirsů* is the element that is communicatively less dynamic in the sequence, because it is that which conveys the information known from the context.[86] As such the expression makes up the sequence's theme. Nevertheless, Firbas points out that even if the notion 'Jirsovi' (*The Jirsas*) belongs to the speaker's and listener's common stock of knowledge, it has not been mentioned before. From the standpoint of the narrow scene, the expression *U Jirsů* may be considered as independent from the context, a conveyor of new information. Nevertheless this would still be the element of least communicative dynamism because 'the setting is naturally communicatively less important than the event'.[87] For Firbas, moreover, the theme is not necessarily the information known or recoverable from the situational context, but may also convey new, or unknown information.[88] From this point of view, our expressions, which convey information not recoverable from the context (or note precisely recoverable) may be considered thematic all the same. Incidentally, it should be observed that in the same example Firbas hypothesizes a certain amount of contextual dependence of the expression (meaning 'context' in a wider, though not unusual sense which also includes the *knowledge shared* by speaker an listener), while in our case this condition is entirely accessory to the phenomenon. Let us look at how other criteria for establishing the thematicity of an expression adapt themselves to egocentric reference. The criterion according to which the theme in unmarked cases (those in which the elements occur as subject, as *wh*-item, as predicates

of finite form) constitutes the point of departure of the clause,[89] again suggests that some of the pronominal expressions under examination are thematic. This conclusion would be valid for those expressions occupying the initial position in the utterance. Nevertheless, it will be recalled that the pronominal forms did not always occupy the initial position (cf. 'ke-ssapeva *kello*?'). Firbas' thesis, that being thematic does not depend on the initial position in the sequence anyway weakens this as a criterion for solving the problem.[90] On the other hand, if we attempt to face the question in terms of the 'degree' of communicative dynamism, we should conclude that our expressions definitely do not take on central or high values on the scale; that is they are doubtless not rhematic, but neither can one claim that they have a minimum value, or one which may be compared to that of a normal thematic expression which, though in a reduced sense, contributes to the communicative progression. I would rather consider them as 'breaking points', information gaps in the progression of communication. My impression is that the real speakers which we examined, present a thematization that is deviant with respect to the norm, one of whose most noticeable aspects is constituted precisely by egocentric reference. The conclusion that the pronominal forms used egocentrically are thematic (though in a deviant manner) also finds support in an argument that seems decisive. We have in fact observed that by definition referring expressions are those that convey information on 'what is being talked about' and by introducing Halliday's plausible distinction between 'what was being talked about' (roughly the given, but not necessarily the theme) and 'what is being talked about' (the theme),[91] our conclusion seems maintainable.

It should be noted that by viewing the phenomenon of egocentric reference as a deviant thematization with respect to the norm, one is assuming that it is something quite different from a mere mistake in the speaker's presupposition. From the listener's viewpoint there is no difference between the assumption of the first thesis and that of the second. The communicative 'mistake', whatever it may be, is still felt in the semiotic structure of communication because 'the peg to which the message is hung', the theme, subsists in its intensional completeness for the speaker, but not for the listener. As we have seen, this means that

the speaker and the listener do not assign the same semantic representation to the same utterance. That is the phenomenology described in points 1) to 3) remains unchanged, while it is the situation from the speaker's viewpoint that changes: the deviant thematization in fact refers to specific features of his functional grammar.

A little earlier it was stated that pronominal forms used in a deviant manner mark a breaking point in the course of communication. More generally we may observe that one of the peculiar features of the thematic structure of the discourse of speakers examined is that they proceed by gaps rather than by units of elements coherent with the text, from an informative standpoint. Pronouns, which constitute the typical instruments of cohesion in 'well-formed' texts, become instead elements that separate the utterances in which they occur from the textual structure, in the texts examined.[92]

Another feature of the examined speakers' speech is that the theme is introduced with a general lack of information even where one would expect it to be underlined, because other information derived from the context and text is missing. To a certain extent one might say that the theme is that which is given in the speaker's 'mind' and which he does not take care to communicate appropriately to the listener. At this point various hypotheses may be made about factors related to the phenomenon: for example, that which constitutes the theme of a sequence of discourse is so emotionally significant for the speaker that he is unable to dissociate himself cognitively, he cannot adopt an analytic and descriptive perspective towards that particular entity. Or, as in the case of the tale of the robbery, it may be thought that although the speaker has a particular image of the entire event (and thus a particular image of the thief), his interest is not centred on an identification of the logical subject of the action but on other aspects of the robbery event: for example on the action itself and its effects on the victim, with whom the speaker seems to identify strongly. In this sense the deviant thematization fits into a broader phenomenology, which is that of the strategies of discourse of real speakers, an extremely interesting field of study, that would require much greater attention. Real speakers often reveal discoursive strategies that are far different from those of the ideal speaker. The characteristic

of drops and rises in information, for example, seems to be peculiar to the communicative processes in which the addressers are real speakers. I have already observed that natural conversation does not come at all close to the optimum model in which both speaker and listener tacitly cooperate toward achieving the main aim of an efficient and successful communication. The flow of information from addresser to addressee is anything but continuous; gaps or drops often cause the listener to slow down his decodification and, if he is interested in a 'strong' comprehension, he must frequently stop the progress of communication and explicitly ask the speaker to supply the missing information. Clearly the listener may not be motivated by a strong comprehension and in this case his decodification will contain drops in information parallel to the drops in information delivered by the speaker. From this latter's viewpoint, however, the phenomenon is none other than a strategy of discourse different from that which the theoretical linguist considers textually coherent. Egocentric reference is merely an aspect of a strategy of discourse which under other *facies* also appears as the phenomenon of 'jumping from one thing to another' while speaking, or in the phenomena of the ellipsis of non-recoverable elements that are so frequent among real speakers of non-high cultural level.

All that remains at this point is for us to examine the functional and sociolinguistic factors of the phenomenon.

6. If we consider the social identity of the speakers producing the phenomena of egocentric reference, we may observe an increase in the occurrences in those who are 40 years old or more, and according to the level of education. These are mainly old and uneducated people and, more interesting still, with the exception of speaker E, housewives and somewhat less often, old-age pensioners. Nevertheless I should like to point out that from some non-systematic observation carried out, it appears that the phenomenon also concerns speakers with a medium degree of education and under 40 years of age, when they shift to a more informal register. Thus at the present time one cannot draw any definite conclusions about the relationship between the phenomenon and such characteristics as age or education

(as to some hypotheses on this matter, see Sornicola 1980).

A more interesting fact emerging from the files on these speakers and which was confirmed by my own non-systematic observations, is instead that in every case these were people who lived alone or who did not lead a very active social life outside of their place of work. This fact tallies with the egocentric nature of the referential function in these speakers and provides empirical support to some arguments of a functional type.

The basic problem in our analysis is that of a use of the referential function that is deviant compared to particular postulates that are traditionally linked to this. These postulates are expressed emblematically by Grice's principles, which represent the conditions for the so-called 'conversational implicatures', particularly in the principle of quantity and manner:

Quantity: 1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange); 2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Manner: Be perspicuous: 1) Avoid obscurity of expression; 2) Avoid ambiguity; 3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); 4) Be orderly.[94]

In effect these principles reflect some of the traditional views on the referential and descriptive function of language and more generally of communicative processes. To assume that in carrying out the act of referring to someone or something the speaker is always implicitly (and I should say, essentially) interested in the efficiency of communication is the same as saying that this characteristic is peculiar, and constituent to the referential function. Obviously, it is plausible to think that there are characteristics typical of each of the various communicative functions. Nevertheless it is also true that sociolinguistic investigations have opened the way to new perspectives of research in which one does not concentrate so much on the examination of the specific invariants of each function as on the analysis of the differences in their actualisation. In this way the relationship between the invariant and the variant has been reversed because the possibility has been recognized of gaining knowledge of the constituents, structural characteristics of a communicative function precisely through the study of the differences in its use. The road is longer

but in all likelihood, safer. A great deal of data has been collected, for instance, on the social or interpersonal function. It has been seen that this has a different outcome from culture to culture. Nevertheless, it is possible to speak about such a function which as a theoretical model sums up the various ways in which the members of a linguistic community enter into intersubjective relationships and set up relationships of exchange. Yet it is precisely from sociolinguistic field research that we have received information that modifies the apparently obvious assumption on the pre-eminence of language in this function: in some cultures, silence may be required as the semiotic instrument of the interaction in some situations. Similarly, as far as what Halliday calls the textual function is concerned, an analysis carried out in contrastive terms allows us to perceive that beneath the structure defined as a 'text', there exist some quite different organizations. Thus field research on the use of the referential function may point out what is really characteristic of this. To our ends, we have observed that some commonplaces about the speaker's aims in 'referring to', which are somehow corollary to the concept of reference, do not withstand the evidence of the facts examined. The speakers observed are not concerned with the success of their 'referring to', or at least they do not take any precautions to ensure this result. They seem to talk 'for themselves', rather than for the listeners.

It might be noted that in the cases quoted the phenomenon generally occurred in fragments of text of a narrative or assertive nature. This connection could lead us to believe that after all in texts of this kind the speaker does not necessarily have any motive to ensure that the listener receives sufficient information, as he might have in asking him a question or asking for information or favours. Nevertheless, I must say that I have come across the phenomenon even in questions and, moreover, in questions where the speaker had considerable interest in the answer. This final observation, however surprising it may be, gives us the right to conclude that the 'unsuccessfulness' in these speakers' use of referring expressions is an indication of a particular configuration of the referential function as it has been acquired and developed in the process of socialization. It is these speakers' referential function that has developed in such a way, that in referring to entities outside of the concrete context of speech they use

'inappropriately' (from the standpoint of the communicative competence of a speaker of the standard language (referring expressions typically required when referring to entities given in the deictic context[96] (or in that derived from this which we call the universe-of-discourse). Whether this is due to the speaker's incapacity to keep a certain distance from the object to which he refers, or to his lack of interest in it, the most general feature of the phenomenon seems to consist in his leading the message's entire informative structure back to his own coordinates, his own 'world', in his inability to adopt the listener's viewpoint, in speaking for himself, from which the reference derives its mark of 'egocentricity'. It is quite true that a residue of egocentricity cannot be eliminated from the very structure of natural languages; one need only think that during a dialogue:

'The speaker, by virtue of being the speaker, casts himself in the role of ego and relates everything to his viewpoint. He is at the zero-point of the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of what we will refer to as deictic context.'[97]

But in this case egocentrism is due to the structure of the dialogue as such, which in no way lessens the ability, of an eminently social nature, to take on the 'others' viewpoint in the act of meaning. It is no mere chance that the ability to decentralize the immediate and egocentric viewpoint, at progressively higher levels, is the mark of the phases of development from infancy to the adult age,[98] and more generally, it underlines the passage from a phase of limited socialization to one of broader socialization. From a psychological viewpoint, this observation is congruent with another: the considerable difficulty encountered in separating referential function from emotional function in these speakers. There is no need for us to stress that a clear distinction between intellectual and affective processes is a fiction: in reality these condition each other. Nevertheless, to a certain extent it is possible to distinguish a cognitive component in attitude from an affective or emotional one. This fact of the collapse of the referential and emotional function also reflects a particular socialization and not only idiosyncratic features of the personality.[99]

Egocentric reference is a phenomenon also congruent with the characteristics of a 'restricted code' revealed by these speakers. The lack of explicit description[100] to identify

the object of reference is a typical aspect of a restricted communicative style; also typical of this style is the feature of contextual dependence, whose other side is precisely a prevalent use of indexical (or 'exophoric') expressions.[101] In an elaborated style, on the other hand, the coding of the meanings would be explicit and articulate and, therefore, contextually independent.[102] In commenting on the results of an analysis carried out by Hawkins, Bernstein stresses particularly the linguistic production of two children:

'The first child [i.e.; the one who uses an elaborated code] takes very little for granted, whereas the second child [the one who uses a restricted code] takes a great deal for granted . . . We could say that the speech of the first child generated universalistic meanings in the sense that the meanings are freed from the context and so understandable by all, whereas the speech of the second child generated particularistic meanings, in the sense that the meanings are closely tied to the context and would be fully understood by others only if they had access to the context which originally generated speech.'[103]

In the case commented on by Bernstein the child who used indexical expressions was referring to entities actually given in the extralinguistic context (all the children had been shown some pictures in a particular sequence and had been asked to describe them, telling the story illustrated). This is why Bernstein can state that the child's linguistic production is generated by the context. In the cases we examined the use of indexical expressions, as we observed, was not determined by any context able to be 'objectively' reconstructed but, if at all, by the speaker's world of knowledge. The characteristic of taking the context for granted is not only present where the context is in a: direct relation to linguistic production but also when the context–production relationship is not physically contemporaneous or co-present. The context, therefore, does not so much act as a semiotic structure accessible to the speaker as to the listener. We have interpreted what Bernstein calls 'taking the context for granted' as the presence within the speaker of a particular configuration of the referential function causing the addesser's coding of the meanings to come about by means of an interiorized pointing to, almost as though it were an ostension not by the speaker to the deictic situation but by the speaker to his own cognitive and emotional world. The circuit going from

perception to action, from memory to action is only partially interrupted by scarcely articulated and differentiated linguistic grills.

7. By considering the phenomenon of egocentric reference as the effect of a particular configuration of the referential function, we are left with the problem of defining the exact position of this kind of deviance.

Although in some instances the lack of information with which the speaker points to the referent may be due merely to an erroneous assumption on the listener's knowledge, we have attempted to demonstrate that this is not the case for egocentric reference, where the lack of information seems rather to be explained by a different strategy of discourse connected to a functional differentiation in grammar. Thus by excluding the possibility of a pure and simple communicative error, we exclude the fact that the phenomenon may be immediately assigned to performance. But how must one consider a deviance of a functional nature? If we accept the classic model that distinguishes between competence and performance, we find ourselves in a cul-de-sac. This cannot be led back to a *use* of referring expressions sharply distinguishable from the more complex cognitive structures of the speaker. Moreover, it cannot be considered as a phenomenon of competence either, if we give the term 'competence' the same narrow meaning as Chomsky, because the deviance does not concern the grammaticality of the sentence corresponding to the utterance, but its acceptability in the concrete situations of its use.[104] The more complex model of competence, that of communicative competence, may solve the problem in the sense that here the appropriateness of the message depends on the speaker's specific abilities. Communicative competence, in fact, is considered in a more pervasive and articulate manner, as the knowledge of a set of rules for producing not only that which is formally *possible*', but also that which is 'appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated'.[105] From this point of view, then, egocentric reference is an aspect of a deviant communicative competence or rather, to use a term borrowed

from anthropology, it is the 'other' with respect to a communicative competence which, to our ends, we may consider as standard: that is the competence of a speaker with a high level of education and a broad and differentiated socialization. It is precisely his type of socialization which allows the speaker in question to dispose of the rules for the appropriate contextualization of the referring expressions he uses. Implicitly *this* is the speaker and *these* the specific rules of communicative competence which logicians and linguists have taken into account when turning their attention to the problem of reference.

As we have seen the problem of a deviant referential usage has various aspects: it may also appear under the guise of a deviant thematization and, more generally, of a different organization of discourse.[106] Thus we obtain a particular configuration not only of the referential but also of the textual function. In this case, too, the deviance affects competence and is not merely a phenomenon of performance.[107] Nevertheless it is important to note that the theoretical position of the phenomenon is anything but obvious. Do linguistic functions concern competence or performance, or should what we call the organization of discourse be placed within a theory of competence or a theory of performance?[108] In effect, the organization of discourse is a problem so complex as not to be able to be tackled using clear-cut oppositions. The act of uttering is a many-sided phenomenon which cannot be reduced to the sum of a system of linguistic rules and of the systems of putting these rules into action, as Fodor and Garret maintain. The options effected by the speaker in the act of utterance are not something extrinsic and accidental with respect to the potential system of linguistic knowledge that he has internalized: these options are often semantico-functional before being grammatical. The fact is that for the study of communicative processes there is little use in distinguishing what the speaker *knows* from what he *does*. In natural communication the speaker does not judge abstractly the well-formedness or appropriateness of the message, but he codes (structures grammatically) processes of his cognitive and affective world, or decodes (attempts to carry out its reconversion) the sequence organized grammatically within a structure of meaning,[109] to some specific end. The phenomenology of communication in turn cannot be separated from the broader context of social

interaction in which it is developed, or rather from the needs and aims for which it is carried out. The crucial point in the study of the phenomena of human communication seems to be rather that of justifying how a particular meaning potential[110] is coded and decoded during linguistic interaction. Our as yet underdeveloped understanding of these mechanisms is perhaps due in part to the competence–performance model, which, on the one hand, separates that which the speaker knows from what he does and, on the other, acts as a neutral point with respect to analysis and synthesis, that is with respect to production and comprehension. The study of real communicative processes calls to mind not so much these dichotomies as the need for a model in which there exists a complex interrelation between the speaker's world, specifically semiotic knowledge and abilities, and the effecting of the correlative options within these two systems. This seems valid both for the coding and for the decoding though obviously with different modes of fulfilment in each case. It is precisely these options and their relationship to the above systems that up until now have remained in the background of research into the communicative processes. Why the speaker (or listener) should put a particular meaning potential into action rather than another, thus shutting off some circuits in his operative and semiotic networks (carrying out particular options rather than others) is not a question that can be tackled in abstractly cognitive terms: it has its roots in the structure of social interaction.[111] If one maintains the competence–performance model there remains a gap between these two more or less dichotomized poles which cannot be filled without something being left over: between competence and performance stands the real speaker who uses language in concrete communicative processes.

University of Naples

FOOTNOTES

1   Labov 1972 proved that the distinction between competence and performance is far from being a universally applicable model. In fact the possibility of distinguishing what the speaker knows from what he does depends on contingent situations connected with some characteristics of the linguistic phenomenon (for instance, its degree of standardization, its degree of penalization or social appreciation) or of the user (for instance his degree of education).

2   In reading generative literature one can easily find the expression 'in my own dialect' accompanying the statement of existence of a linguistic phenomenon. This looks inconsistent as an approach to the problem of linguistic variability.

3   On the notion of 'appropriateness' ('happiness', 'success') see Austin 1962, pp. 8-24.

4   Lyons 1977a, p. 180.

5   Note that in Neapolitan the demonstrative pronoun *quello* is also used as a personal pronoun.

6   On the notion of 'encyclopedic knowledge' see Castelfranchi 1973.

7   With 'the pronoun refers to' I avail myself of an improper use of the verb *to refer*. The expressions (or parts of them) as such are not assumed to refer to anything. It is people using them who perform such an action (referring to something is in fact an action: cf. Linsky 1967, p. 79): see Strawson 1950, p. 10; Bar-Hillel 1954, p. 74; Linsky 1967, pp. 76-77; Lyons 1977a, p. 177. It is, on the other hand, the same standpoint according to which it is not the linguistic signs but their users who are assumed to mean: cf. De Mauro 1965, p. 203.

8   Lyons 1977a, p. 184.

9   This matter is well summarized by Lyons 1977a, p. 180; this thesis will be, however, closely analysed in paragraph no. 3.

10   By 'topic' both here and in other parts of the text I mean the semantic not the functional use of the term.

11   Here the use of the term 'presupposition' refers to the notion of 'pragmatic presupposition', for which see Keenan 1971, pp. 49-51.

12   Bellert 1970, pp. 336-337 theorizes about the possibility that in a sequence of utterances $E_1, . . ., E_{i+1}$, propositions acting as intermediate links for the construction or the interpretation of a coherent text can be inferred (from determinate linguistic rules or from pragmatic presuppositions).

13   To tell the truth, the logical status of this referring expression is different from that of the expressions examined so far. The plural NPs of any type are not uniquely referring expressions as the singular NP. Their treatment, however, is, on a certain extent, applicable to the plural NPs: cf. Strawson 1950, pp. 26-27; Vendler 1967, p. 120 n *a*.

14   On the indefinite reference see Strawson 1950, pp. 24-25.

15   Of course I do not underestimate the difficulty of a referential interpretation of the third person pronouns and of the first person plural pronoun. I shall deal with third person pronouns later on. For a structural

analysis of the latter see Kuryowicz 1972, pp. 176-177.

16   In these cases the missing information is relative to the gender. That is why the pronominal form is only partially recoverable.

17   It is actually right to wonder if one can speak of a real referring expression for this reconstructed pronominal form. I should answer in the affirmative since the speaker is predicating something of a certain individual, presupposing, in so doing, his existence and leading the listener to do the same.

18   Cf. Lyons 1977a, p. 188.

19   Cf. Lyons 1977b, pp. 507-508. The relationship between theme and psychological subject, however, is a problematical one: cf. Firbas 1964, p. 274 who criticizes Trávníček's conception of theme as the 'element that links up directly with the O [object – J.F.] of thought.'

20   Cf. Isenberg 1971, p. 162.

21   As to the semantic contiguity cf. Harweg 1968, pp. 192 and following; as to the sloppy identity coreference cf. Grinder-Postal 1971.

22   The research on the spoken language that I am actually carrying out provides some evidence which confirms this assumption. The indeterminacy of thematic subject, characteristic of the spoken language (already pointed out by Bally 1932, p. 107) is manifest in various linguistic phenomena. For example, the instances in which the speakers under examination identify the speaker of a radio or television broadcast with the broadcast itself are extremely numerous. Of course, it is not easy to decide whether this identification refers to the organization of the speaker semantic competence. It might as well be a phenomenon of occasional overlapping of two meanings that are well distinct in the speaker competence. For a more detailed discussion of the subject see Sornicola 1980.

23   Note, however, that in standard Italian *spegnere* means in this case 'rendere inattiva un'apparecchiatura elettrica'.

24   Karttunen 1969 studying the conditions for the setting up of discourse referents and for coreference observes that: 'In generale, i referenti testuali esistono nel dominio del "mondo com'è visto dal parlante" ' (p. 131).

25   Generally speaking, in fact, within a text, the determinative article (or an equivalent determiner) leads to the pre-information, the indeterminative article to the post-information: cf. Weinrich 1976, pp. 59-60.

26   Strawson 1950, p. 20.

27   As a matter of fact, in the bibliography regarding the problem of reference, especially in the latest one, the linguistic aspect is almost always linked to the logico-philosophical aspect. In recent years, however, both linguists and philosophers have come closer to a pragmatic viewpoint in the treatment of the problem.

28   Cf. Lyons 1977b, p. 673 n. 18.

29   Strawson 1950, p. 17.

30   Cf. Searle 1969, p. 119, according to whom we have a "fully completed" reference when the listener identifies unambiguously the referent. A reference which does not reach this goal is, nevertheless, a successful reference: cf. Searle 1969, ibid.; Donnellan 1966, p. 106.

31   The expressions typically defining classes of objects which satisfy the conditions fixed by them are definite descriptions. It is doubtful, on the contrary, if the pronouns and the proper nouns behave similarly, that is if they have a denotation: cf. Lyons 1977a, pp. 214-215. Cf. also Strawson 1950, p. 21: according to him, the pronouns, too, have a certain degree, even if a slight one, of 'descriptive meaning', that is 'conventional limitation, in application, to things of a certain general kind, or possessing certain general characteristics'.

32   This point was well expounded by Strawson 1950, pp. 16-17.

33   Strawson 1950, p. 19 [italics are mine].

34   Bar-Hillel 1954, pp. 80-81 passim.

35   Donnellan 1966, p. 106.

36   Idem, p. 103.

37   Idem, p. 102.

38   Idem, p. 106.

39   Strawson 1950, p. 14.

40   Cf. Strawson 1950, pp. 16-17; Bar-Hillel 1954, p. 69. Note that here the term 'context' also means the *ad hoc* conventions which regulate the use of proper nouns. In fact, if the speaker is mentioning a John or a Charles, apart from other more properly contextual conditions, the listener must know a convention which associates the proper noun to a particular individual in order to be able to know to which particular individual with that name one is referring to.

41   As to the 'historical' or 'geographical knowledge' Strawson means that 'These adjectives are not to be construed as qualifying academic subject alone, but also knowledge of the most unpretentious kind about the particular things and people which enter into our minute-to-minute or day-to-day transactions with the world' (Strawson 1964, p. 87).

42   Ibid.

43   Idem, p. 86 [italics mine].

44   In effect, it is not quite clear what Strawson means by 'assertive discourse'. I shall take up the functional consideration of reference again in no. 6.

45   At least this is the current opinion in the bibliography on this subject; for a partial reference to it see n. 62.

46   Lyons 1977b, p. 671.

47   Idem, pp. 671-672.   :

48   This criterion is central both in the logical literature on reference and in the linguistic literature on communicative structure.

49   Cf. Stalnaker 1970, pp. 387-388; Hintikka 1967, pp. 15-16.

50   Cf. Stalnaker 1970, l.c.; Bellert 1970, pp. 339-340 who deals with the problem from a textual point of view; cf. also Wunderlich 1971, pp. 177 and following: according to him one of the elements of the communicative situation is made by the set of assumptions the speaker makes on the knowledge of the listener.

51   According to Wittgenstein 'Ein "innerer Vorgang" bedarf äußerer kriterien' (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 153). This observation is in connection to the propositional attitudes, which must therefore be linked to 'public criteria': cf. Hintikka 1967, p. 16.

52   Searle 1969, p. 88 maintains that: 'Whatever can be meant can be

said. Applied to the present case of definite reference that amounts to saying that whenever it is true that a speaker *means* a particular object (in this case, "means" = "intends to refer to") it must also be true that he can say exactly which object it is that he means.' He goes on asserting that this is only a rough formulation of the principle of identification, 'for the principle of identification only states that a necessary condition of definite reference is the ability to provide an identifying description, and it is the identifying description which provides the vehicle for *saying* what is *meant* in the reference'. In particular, a border-line case in satisfying the principle of identification is given by the 'indexical presentation of the object referred to'. These statements, however, seem inadequate to our problem and they are in contrast with the conclusion that the unsuccessful result of the egocentric reference is an effect of a restricted code.

53   Cf. pp. 89-90. As a matter of fact what is important for Strawson here is to make preliminary statements for a discussion on the so-called 'truth-value gaps'.

54   See p. 78.

55   I quote the terminology used by Bar-Hillel 1954. In this article he makes a distinction among sentence-type, sentence-token and proposition. The terminology I use in other parts of the text follows the distinction of Bar-Hillel 1967 among 'utterance', 'sentence', 'proposition', in which the last two terms refer to theoretical constructions, while the first refers to the level of concrete, observable entities.

56   Bar-Hillel 1954, pp. 79-80.

57   See p. 80.

58   Cf. Lyons 1977b, p. 637. See also his bibliography on this subject.

59   See Lyons 1975, p. 61.

60   Obviously, here it is the mathematical meaning of 'information' that is in question.

61   Thus one accepts what Lyons maintains: 'Anaphora involves the transference of what are basically spatial notions to the temporal dimension of the context-of-utterance and the reinterpretation of deictic location in terms of what may be called location in the universe-of-discourse' (Lyons 1977b, p. 670).

62   Cf. Halliday 1967, p. 242; Bellert 1970, pp. 160-161; in particular, for the anaphorical substitution of NP see Paduceva 1970; Postal 1970.

63   Yet, the first case — the one in which the NP precedes the pro-forma — is much more normal: cf. Dressler 1972, p. 25; Lyons 1977b, p. 659.

64   This treatment of the pronouns is distinct from the one according to which they are considered substitutive forms of identical expressions, but not necessarily coreferent (the so-called 'pronouns of laziness' by Geach): cf. Partee 1970, especially pp. 434-437; Partee 1975, pp. 19-23.

65   Cf. Isenberg 1971, p. 165; Dressler 1972, p. 30.

66   Lang 1973, p. 294.

67   Here I use the terminology of Harweg 1968.

68   For an analysis of the problems of 'text' definition, cf. Petöfi 1971, pp. 213, 223 et seq. cf. also Dressler 1972, p. 12.

69   Cf. Isenberg 1971, p. 165.

70   Montague 1967, p. 144.

71   See p. 176.

72   See p. 214.

73   Ibid.

74   Cf. Strawson 1950, pp. 22-23; Benveniste 1956, pp. 255-256.

75   Cf. Lewis 1972, p. 174.

76   I use the term 'information structure' with the meaning given by Halliday 1967.

77   Cf. Halliday 1967, p. 203.

78   Idem, p. 204.

79   Ibid.; see also p. 205: 'The focus of the message, it is suggested, is that which is represented by the speaker as being new, textually (and situationally) non derivable information.'

80   Note that in the cases in which the referent — at least through sloppy identity — can be derived from the co-text, the problem is different: there is such a relation between these expressions and what has been previously said that they can be easily considered as thematic.

81   Halliday 1967, p. 205.

82   Cf. the criticism moved by Trávníček to Mathesius, upholder of this thesis in Firbas 1964, pp. 267-269. Cf. also Firbas' personal observations on pp. 269-272.

83   Cf. Firbas 1964, p. 272.

84   Idem, p. 268.

85   Idem, p. 269.

86   Idem, p. 271.

87   Idem, p. 278 n. 16.

88   Idem, p. 272; cf. also Halliday 1967, p. 212.

89   Halliday 1967, p. 213 (he resumes an old idea of Mathesius).

90   Firbas 1964, accepting a proposal made by Beneš, considers it more convenient to distinguish between 'basis', which should represent the starting point of an utterance, and theme.

91   See Firbas 1964, p. 280 n. 31 for a criticism to the criterion of 'what is being spoken about' as defining the theme; this criterion had been established by Mathesius.

92   The pronominal forms are normally considered as mechanisms of 'cohesion' of the text: cf. Bellert 1970, p. 345; Hasan 1973, p. 280.

93   It looks rather significant that Vennemann 1975, studying the phenomena of ellipsis and those of variation between full lexicalization and pronominalization of the topic in English notes that 'The choice between full lexicalization and pronominalization of topics is also governed in part by stylistic and social parameters' and concludes anyhow that the examination of this stylistic and social variation goes beyond the theory of grammar and beyond the domain 'of properly extendable logic' (p. 326).

94   Cf. Grice 1975, p. 46.

95   Cf. Basso 1970.

96   That would seem to move in the direction of Lyons' thesis (1975), according to which 'Reference to entities outside the situation of utterance, indefinite and opaque reference, reference to hypothetical entities (. . .),

and various other kinds of reference that have puzzled philosophers and linguists are at least ontogenetically secondary. The fact that the referring expressions used in such cases are comparable in terms of their grammatical structure with deictically referring expressions suggests that their use and function is derivative, and depends upon the prior existence of the mechanisms for deictic reference by means of language' (p. 82).

97   Cf. Lyons 1977b, p. 638.

98   Cf. Piaget 1940, in particular the concluding observations on page 78.

99   These observations, moreover, are well justified by what Halliday points out: 'The system of natural language can best be explained in the light of the social functions which language has evolved to serve. *Language is as it is because of what it has to do'* ([italics are mine]: Halliday 1970a, p. 17). Here Halliday refers to the 'system' of natural languages, but his considerations can be of use in explaining part of the sociolinguistic variation, too.

100   Cf. Hawkins 1973, pp. 91-92.

101   For this term cf. Hasan 1973, p. 280.

102   Bernstein 1971, pp. 177-179; Hawkins l.c.; Hasan l.c.

103   Bernstein 1971, p. 179.

104   Lang 1973 gets into a similar blind alley when he considers deviant sentences lacking a textual introduction such as *Er kommte heute* in which the referent of *er* cannot be identified in the situational context. He maintains that, rather than speaking of semi-grammaticality, one must speak of unacceptability, even if he then adds that it would not be correct to include this evaluation of unacceptibility in a theory of performance: according to Chomsky, in fact, the factors that can be included in an evaluation of acceptability are of different kind, they concern memory limitations, intonational and stylistic factors, and so on. Lang ends by saying that 'Die Akzeptabilität, mit der wir es hier zu tun haben, wird aber bestimmt durch funktionale Aspekte der Kommunikation. *Dafür ist der richtige theoretische Ort erst noch zu suchen'* (p. 294 [italics are mine]).

105   Hymes 1971, p. 281.

106   Besides, in the last few years the problem of deixis has been included in the so-called 'Functional Sentence Perspective' which was directed at the beginning to the study of the structure of the sentence and the clause. A deictic NP is a typical communicative element, a 'text-creating element': see Halliday 1970b, p. 29; Petöfi 1971, p. 205.

107   Cf. Halliday 1970b. He identifies the textual function with what Daneš calls the 'level of organization of utterance' and as regards the problem of its theoretical position he observes: 'I do not think it should be regarded as restricted to *parole*, or to the utterance' (p. 28). Scinto 1977, pp. 23-24 maintains that the textual organization concerns a level of performance of which it is possible to give a theory; this means that the textual organization is considered important for the development of a model of competence more complex than the traditional one, that is a model of competence 'discourse based'. For a criticism of this thesis cf. Lo Cascio 1978.

108   A survey of the most well known literature on the subject testifies to the widespread discussion of this problem. Bernstein considers communica-

tive styles as a 'fashion of speaking', a matter of use: see Bernstein 1971, p. 179; Gumperz and Hymes 1972, p. 471. From a different outlook Halliday 1970b wondering if the linguistic functions are to be ascribed to the linguistic system or to the *parole* concludes in favour of the first hypothesis (cf. pp. 27-29).

109   Cf. the interesting observations by Wilks 1975, pp. 329-330 on the 'derivational paradigm' of generative transformational grammar which fixing as basic principle the well-formedness of sentences has not realized that 'rejecting utterances is just what humans do not do. They try to understand them'. Besides, the formal separation of meaningful sentences from meaningless ones is not feasible: The reason is simply that, given any disputed utterance, we could not know formally of it that it was not meaningful, because speakers have the ability to embed odd-looking utterances in stories so as to make them meaningful in the context of use' (p. 330).

110   On the notion of 'meaning potential' see Halliday 1970a, p. 9; Halliday 1971, pp. 240-244.

111   Cf. Furth 1969, p. 95.

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1) 'A Milanese said / / we, about that case there they were talking about, the case of this boy who played the joke / / he was silly, because in these times they can't be played / / I think they won't condemn him, because that was self-defence / / what did he know? a year ago he had this bit of bad luck! / / I mean, I see someone, I'm already shaken, of course I want to defend myself, too / / he defended himself, if he'd said: it is a joke!, are these jokes to play in times like these?'

2) 'And the Milanese, do you know what they said? he said, in the evening we, I don't know who interviewed him, . . ., he said, in the evening we Milanese don't go out anymore'

3) 'Listen! I was going up / / I saw two young men coming down / / a white muffler / / a poor old woman with another old woman, they stole her purse with half a million lire in it / / do you believe me, missis? I shouted after them, nobody moved, nobody, nobody at all / / I only saw the old woman screaming for help, I cried, then a man said: keep quiet, missis, they are armed!, I was so upset inside myself! / / because I had seen that old woman, they were taking her away, she didn't say another word, I said: what a rascal! [or, alternatively, "what rascals!", for the occurrence of the central vowel [ə] in the last syllable of "mmaʃkaltsonə" makes it difficult to determine exactly the value of the number morpheme for the word], nobody reacted / / he said call the police! / / after they had all gone away!'

4) 'something / / that was done last night, all kinds of nasty things happened to that one there / / I don't remember now / / the wife in New York / /.all kinds of things happened (to her)'

5) 'Because you are to know that in war time we had been evacuated, the villages weren't organized to take in all the school population / / then we all remained there / / in Naples schools were closed for / / that is, whether they were or not, in a word, we all had been evacuated'

6) 'And then they begin again, I mean, with the repeated broadcast, you might as well not switch it on at all'

7) 'Another time, at Antignano / / a woman with a purse, he snatched the purse / / I met a lady / / she said: Rina, goodness gracious, how you look! pale, nervous, you see, you look like [?] / / I said: listen to me, Assuntina, I have just met / / I have seen with my own eyes / / he snatched the purse from a woman, it was inside a straw-bag'

8) 'There's one thing I find, that these, let's say, shock performances have a greater effect if they are short, haven't they? / / so, I repeat, [he/it] created sensation fifteen years ago, when you had no idea of going to the theatre, at that time it was really a new theatre, a theatre that shocked people, it made a great sensation, because they were the first to use political criticism, they used political satire, they criticized this or that person'

9) 'If I tell you something you won't believe it / / they have taken on various people, because in these days as the Stammati Act has come in to force, it was necessary to see how many jobs there were actually available, permanent job / / they made a certain report, which they have sent to the head of my Department [the speaker is talking about a Department in the Municipal Administration] / / the other evening [someone] said: I haven't read this mail yet! there was no need to worry, I finished doing what I had to do, I said: I want to read this in peace / / they had a competitive examination for district nurses . . . and one hundred and seventeen posts were not filled!'

10)   Interviewer's question: 'Which programmes do you prefer?'
Speaker's reply: 'You see, I watch the Tormentone [a programme of a local broadcast corporation] with great pleasure, you see'
Interviewer's question: 'Why?'
Speaker's reply: 'Because it deals with events that really happen, from it we can really get to know what is true / / I watch it with great pleasure, so that last evening my husband said to me: I have to write to Angelo Manna the speaker of the transmission that I have lost my wife'
Interviewer's question: 'How is that?'
Speaker's answer: 'Really, I always like to listen to him, I like him, because he calls a spade spade, do you understand? I am disappointed that one of his weekly broadcasts has been suppressed, previously they had them twice a week, but now it takes place only on Thursday'

11)   'He made a greater impression when he was the only actor who satirized social customs, but now there are the 'Cabaret', the 'Bagaglino', so in my opinion [he/it] has become deprived of meaning / / to make it more committed, he has made it rather prolix'

12)   'Sale and purchase of clothes, of everything, armchairs, things you don't need any longer, exchange them, sell them cheap, that's a good thing, too, without throwing it away / / without throwing it away or giving it away'

13)   Interviewer's question: 'Do you ever listen to the radio?'
Speaker's reply: 'Hardly ever, because I had a small one, I always took it with me, but now it's all burnt out'

14)   'I switch on another radio programme, I find another news bulletin, so I switch it off altogether and go to bed'

15)   'The other day there was that man in a science fiction [film], this sort of space capsule entered his stomach'

16)   'What did he know? a year ago he had this bit of bad luck!'

17)   'Because this fellow is more, how can I say? / / this Nicola is very spontaneous, how can I say, he is like a father, is it clear?'

In the English translations of the conversational fragments, the subject of the sentence is given in brackets, to indicate an interpolated element, which is not present in the surface structure of the Italian text; obviously it is required in the translation because of the structure of English. Two alternative elements have often been interpolated: in such cases we have an insoluble syncretism of them.

I wish to thank Professor Thomas Frank for his helpful remarks on the way some phenomena found in spoken Italian are also found in spoken English.

RIASSUNTO

Si è rilevato in alcuni testi dialogici di parlanti reali un particolare uso delle espressioni indicali (principalmente si tratta di pronomi, ma non mancano esempi con descrizioni definite o con nomi propri) che contraddice le condizioni teoriche attese per il riferimento. I testi in questione, infatti, mostrano in alcune espressioni referenziali l'assenza di coordinate indicali che permettano l'identificazione del referente. Tale caratteristica è riscontrabile tipicamente nei testi conversazionali ellittici da parlanti che condividano una grande quantità di conoscenze (condizione pragmatica non valevole per i nostri testi) e nel monologo interiorizzato, dove i ruoli di parlante e ascoltatore coincidono; in questo caso, quindi, il parlante si trova nella particolarissima situazione di poter organizzare una rete informativa minima. La nostra ipotesi è che esista uno stretto legame tra il monologo interiorizzato e il fenomeno in esame: per l'uso di espressioni referenziali individuate si è pertanto proposto il termine 'riferimento egocentrico'. Si è inoltre tentato di trovare una collocazione teorica del fenomeno, con speciale riguardo al modello competenza-esecuzione.