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PRAGMATICS OF DIALOGUE IN THE COMEDIES BY PLAUTUS

The comedy language very often imitates the everyday speech, which contributes to the humoristic aspects of the play. In my project I investigated the way in which the Roman playwright Plautus (III/II BC) composed his on-stage dialogues. By using contemporary linguistic theories I indicated the elements of utterance which serve not only to convey meaning of words but also to express the intention of the speaker and to build social ties of union with the addressee. The scholars who focus on the pragmatic aspects of language tend to describe communication in terms of a game: the participants of a conversation have to obey certain rules and to collaborate in order to achieve all the communicative goals.

Within this perspective I assumed that the colloquial dialogue artistically imitated by Plautus consists – just like a game – of a series of moves, introduced by the speakers during their turns of speech. Every action of the interlocutors, moreover, is ruled by a number of social conventions, which allow the conversation to proceed without major obstacles and to be more effective. Accordingly, I distinguished new units of dialogue without recurring to the traditionally used linguistic categories like a word or a sentence.



Throughout my project I employed this theoretical framework in order to describe the conversation opening, i.e. the initial stage of every conversation game. After analyzing all the 20 transmitted comedies by Plautus (and one fragmentary play) I indicated what type of moves has to be used by the speaker, if s/he wants to engage in a (more or less) successful conversation with another character. The results allowed me to create an inventory of conventional formulae and communicative action they introduce. Accordingly, these moves

consist of getting the attention of the addressee, mutual identification, greeting exchange and establishing amicable relations between the participants of interaction. The conversation opening in Plautus takes many different variants and, as a kind of a complex language game, it gets a very ritualistic form.

In the present project I managed to relate different aspects of these communicative conventions with the dramaturgical style of Plautus, namely with his control over the progression of the plot, his humoristic devices and his characterization of the characters (especially in relation with the others). The aim of my investigation was to create a potentially universal tool to study every stage of the dialogue. By finding the connection between different types of conversational moves and rules that govern their use I came up with a 'grammar' of verbal interaction. With this model, hopefully, we are able to understand (to a certain point) the rules and the conventions of the Plautine language 'games'. Moreover, we can finally appreciate how good a 'gamester' this Roman playwright was.

MAIN PUBLICATIONS:

- „Językowa gra władzy. Transgresje hierarchii społecznej w komediach Plauta”, in K. Biały, M. Cieśluk, D. Okoń (ed.), *Elity w świecie starożytnym*, Szczecin 2015, pp. 121-138.
- “(Meta)discursive uses of Latin heus”, *Studia Romanica Posnaniensia*, XLII/5 (2015), pp. 3-22.
- "Okrutne żarty w komediach Plauta jako mechanizm budowania więzi społecznej", in J. Szturc, E. Wesołowska, Ł. Berger (ed.), *Okrucieństwo w kulturze i literaturze europejskiej*, Poznań 2016 (forthcoming).
- "Escenas de bienvenida en las comedias de Plauto", *Scripta Classica* (forthcoming).