

# Dubbed Film Dialogue as an Idiosyncratic Communicative Event

A Systemic Functional Perspective

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[Woody Allen] has a natural talent for dialogue. In his films, people don't just recite lines from the script. More often than not, scenes feel like they're filmed from real life. The thing about realistic dialogue is that it's got to be **imperfect**. In life, you cut sentences, you jump from one thought to another, you interrupt ... And most of Allen's films are dialogue, and it always remains enjoyable, and often hilarious (*Montreal Film Journal* 2006)

# Film and Dialogue

- Film reception contingent on presence of ‘frequent stretches of conversation that **perform no specific narrative function** and whose only objective is to reproduce everyday situations and events’ (Pavesi 2005: 32).
- Film talk is intended to enable effective, economic and streamlined communication: **Underwriting** as a writing strategy that relies on condensation, implicitness and pragmatic resonance (Bloom 2006, Berliner 1999).
- **Double layeredness** of fictional dialogue (Vanoye 1985): interplay between horizontal and vertical dimensions.



## The importance of the vertical dimension

The **cinematic apparatus** has resulted in a 'self-effacing presentational style', based on the simultaneous signification of camerawork/mise-en-scene/editing that serves to select, undercut, distract, reveal, or deform the filmgoer's interpretation of the narrative' (Nornes 2007: 8)

The **vertical dimension** manages to keep audience members absorbed in the fiction and 'maintain an unambiguous, efficient, purposeful and uninterrupted flow of 'narrative information' (Nichols 1991: 165)

# Interplay horizontal and vertical dimensions

Berliner 1999

## Contrived realism

self-effacing  
conventions of  
mainstream  
film-making

## Real realism

reveals similarities  
between creative act  
and  
act of living



**Pre-fabricated orality** between 'maximum and minimum preparedness' (Chaume 2001, 2004): *audiovisual translationese, dubbese*



Translators seem to give priority to structural phenomena in their doubtless attempt to simulate spoken language, although **selective mimesis** occurs, whereby some features are systematically chosen as **privileged carriers** of orality from which the impression of spontaneity is derived (Pavesi 2004: 135)

# Data



57	A: How did you like it?	A: ¿Usted qué opina? [ <i>What do you think?</i> ]
58	B: Oh, I don't know.  It was pretty interesting.	B: Pues no sé. [ <i>I don't know</i> ]  Ha sido interesante. [ <i>It has been interesting</i> ]
59	A: Yeah? I almost fell asleep.	A: Yo casi me duermo. [ <i>I almost fell asleep</i> ]
60	B: I mean, I've never been on a jury before.	B: Es...es...es la primera vez que formo parte de un jurado. [ <i>It's...it's...it's the first time I am part of a jury</i> ].





# Exchange structure

dA1    A2    A1    A2f

dK1    K2    K1    K2f



	Exchange 6		Exchange 5	
22 F:	What is your name, sir?	K2	¿Cuál es su nombre, señor? [What is your name, sir?].	K2
23 E:	Oh, it's that one [ <i>Non verbal: he points at a name in the list</i> ]...yeah.	K1	Ah sí [ <i>Non verbal: he points at a name in the list</i> ]...éste. [ <i>Oh yeah, this one</i> ].	K1
24 F:	Thank you very much.	K2f	Bien, muchas gracias. [ <i>Fine, thank you</i> ]	K2f

# Orbital structure

## Sample 1 (lines 48-53)

DK1 F: What is that for?



K1

G:

Oh, I thought we might wanna vote by ballot.



K1F

F:

Great idea.



# Serial structure

## Sample 1 (lines 48-53)

ai F: What is that for?

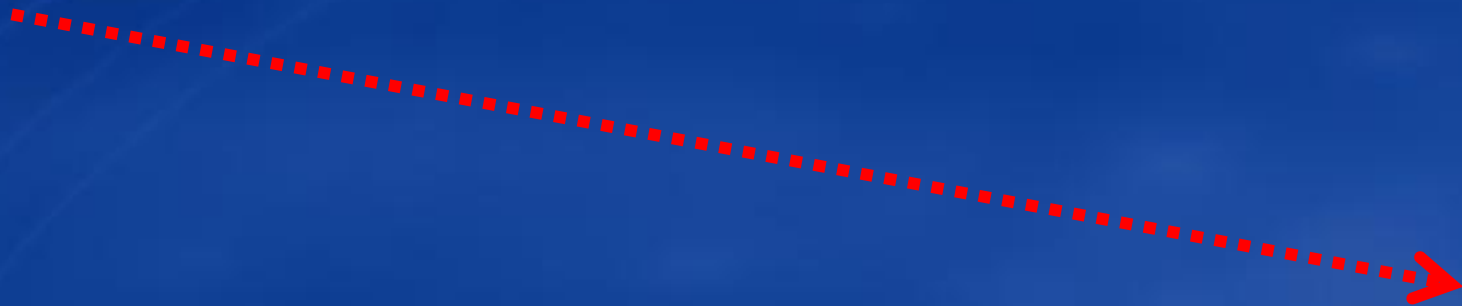
bi G: Oh, I thought we might wanna vote by ballot.

aii F: Great idea.



# Periodical structure

Sample 1 (lines 48-53)



What is that for? - Oh, I thought we might - Great idea.  
wanna vote by ballot.



# Prosodical structure

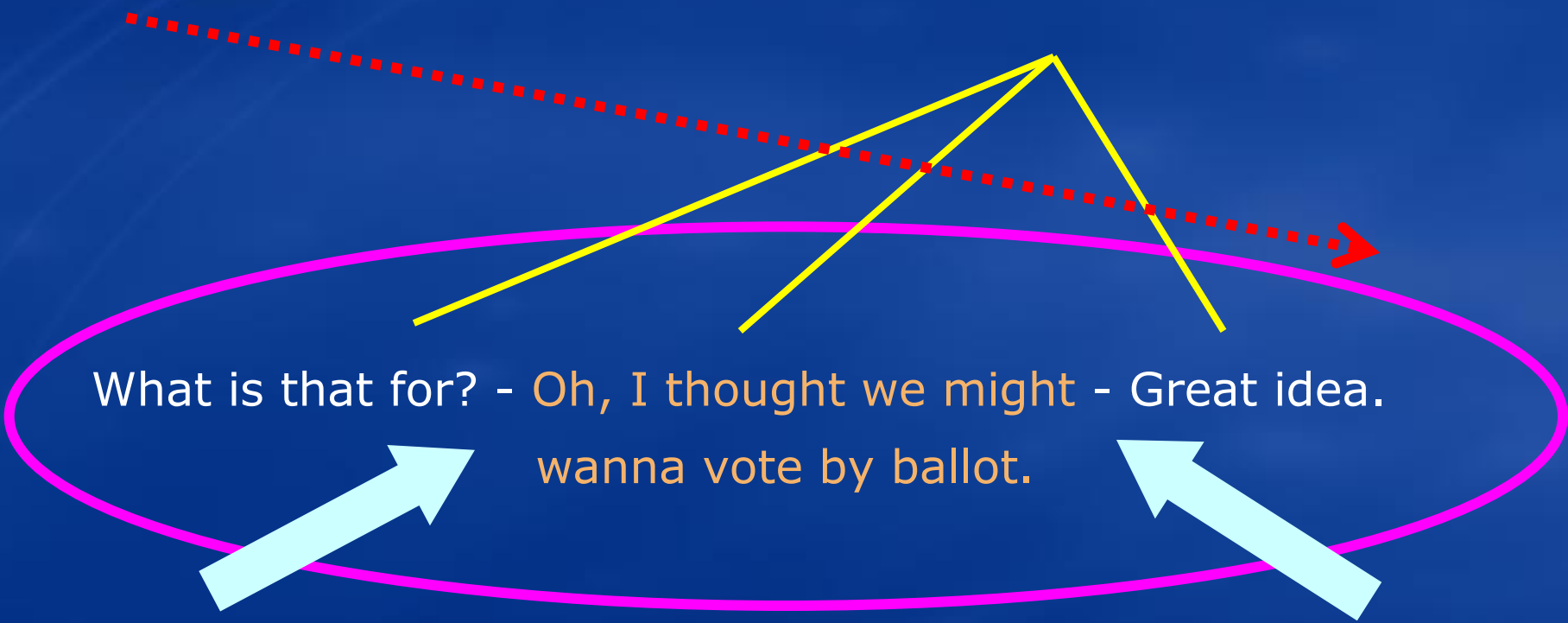
## Sample 1 (lines 48-53)

What is that for? - Oh, I thought we might - Great idea.  
wanna vote by ballot.



# Canonical exchanges

Sample 1 (lines 48-53)



The diagram illustrates canonical exchanges between two sentences. A red dotted arrow points from the first sentence to the second. Three yellow solid lines connect the words in the first sentence to their corresponding words in the second sentence. Two cyan arrows point towards the second sentence from the left and right sides.

What is that for? - Oh, I thought we might - Great idea.  
wanna vote by ballot.



# Disonant mapping I



## Sample 2 (lines 17-28)

K2 A: Could they be wrong?

Cl B: What are you trying to say?

These people sat on the stand under oath.

Rcl A: They are only people. People make mistakes

K2' Could they be wrong?

K1 **B:** Well, no.

I don't think so.



# Disonant mapping II

## Sample 4 (lines 10-15)



A: Supposing they are wrong...

B: What do you mean supposing they are wrong?  
What is the point of having witnesses at all?





# Mood Telos

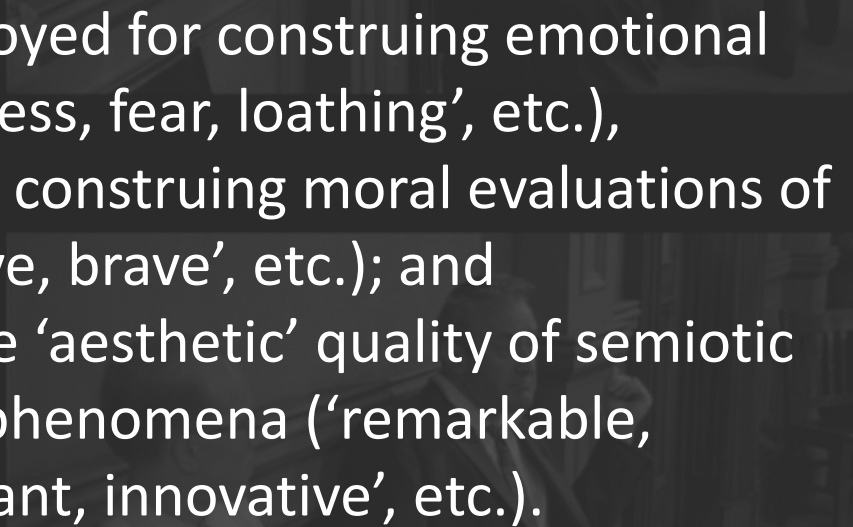
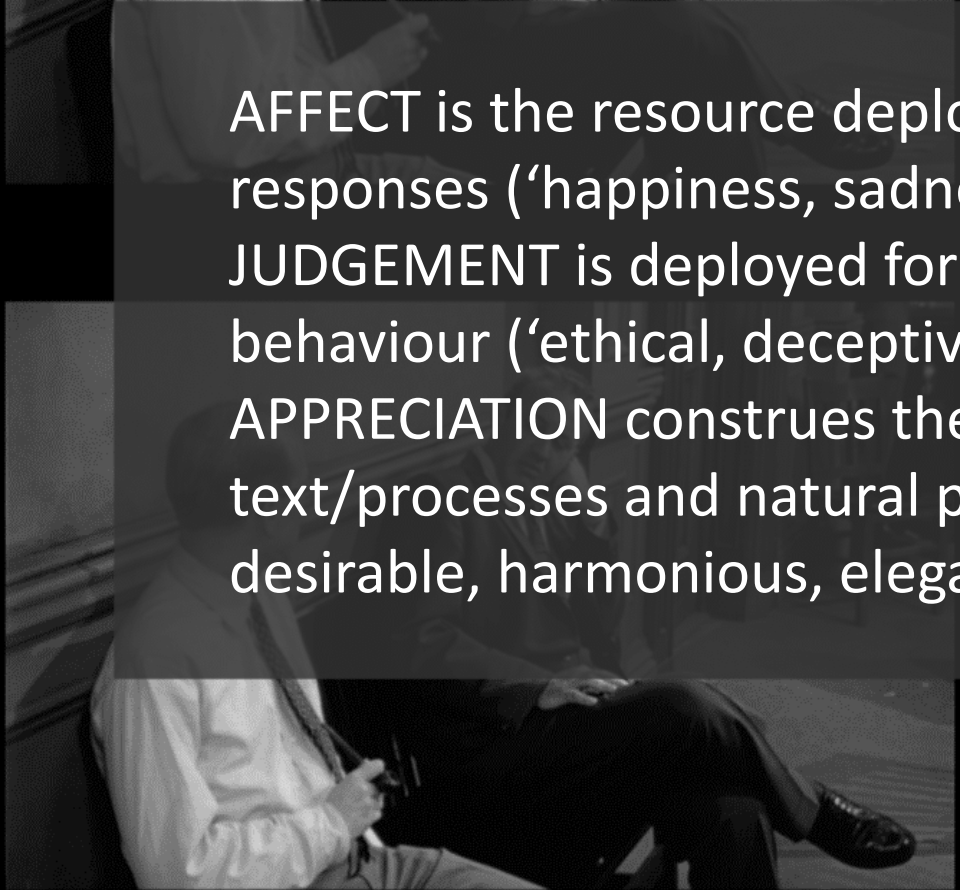

- In the **mood system**, we can formulate our grammatical statements as declarative, interrogative or imperative clauses.
- **Canonical** versus **marked** realizations of mood.
- Such realizations of mood typically involve scales of obligation, probability, usuality, etc.



# Appraisal Telos



AFFECT is the resource deployed for construing emotional responses ('happiness, sadness, fear, loathing', etc.), JUDGEMENT is deployed for construing moral evaluations of behaviour ('ethical, deceptive, brave', etc.); and APPRECIATION construes the 'aesthetic' quality of semiotic text/processes and natural phenomena ('remarkable, desirable, harmonious, elegant, innovative', etc.).



	Exchange 1		Exchange 1'	
57 A:	How did you like it?	K2	¿Usted qué opina? [ <i>What do you think?</i> ]	K2
58 B:	Oh, I don't know.	K1	Pues no sé. [ <i>I don't know</i> ]	K1
	Exchange 2		Exchange 2'	
	It was pretty interesting.	K1	Ha sido interesante. [ <i>It has been interesting</i> ]	K1
59 A:	Yeah?	ch		
	Exchange 3		Exchange 3'	
	I almost fell asleep.	K1	Yo casi me duermo. [ <i>I almost fell asleep</i> ]	K1
	Exchange 4		Exchange 4'	
60 B:	I mean, I've never been on a jury before.	K1	Es...es...es la primera vez que formo parte de un jurado. [ <i>It's...it's...it's the first time I am part of a jury</i> ].	K1
61 A:	No?	K2f	Ah...	K2f

Exchange 5		Exchange 5'		
	I've sat on many juries. Those lawyers talk and talk and talk, even when it's an open-and-shut case like this one...	K1	Yo he participado en muchos. Me enferma oír hablar a los abogados, sobre todo en un caso tan claro como este. <i>[I have taken part in many. I feel sick to hear lawyers speak, especially in such a clear case as this is].</i>	K1
Exchange 6		Exchange 6'		
	Did you ever hear so much talk about nothing?	K2	¿Había oído alguna vez tanta verborrea? <i>[Had you ever heard so much verbiage?]</i>	K2
62 B:	Well, I guess they are entitled.	K1	¿No cree que tienen derecho? <i>[Don't you think they have a right to it?]</i>	ch
63 A:	Sure, they are entitled.	K2f	Sí, claro. <i>[Yes, of course]</i>	rch

	Exchange 7		Exchange 7'	
	It's the system, but...	K1	Así es el sistema. <i>[That's what the system is like]</i>	K1
	Exchange 8		Exchange 8'	
	If you ask me, I'd slap those tough kids down before they start any trouble. It'd save a lot of money.  <i>[Pause]</i>	K1	Deberían darle una paliza a esos chicos antes de que crearan problemas. Se ahorraría tiempo y dinero. <i>[They should batter those kids before they become a problem. It would save time and money].</i>  <i>[Pause]</i>	K1
	Exchange 9		Exchange 9'	
	Let's get started, eh?	A1	¿Qué? ¿Empezamos ya? <i>[So? Shall we get started?]</i>	A2

# Telos Shifts

	<i>12 Angry Men</i>	Scene 1		Scene 2		Scene 3		Scene 4	
	Duration	00:00-04:14		04:15-10:02		10:03-15:10		15:11-24:40	
		SL	TL	SL	TL	SL	TL	SL	TL
1	Overall No. Exchanges	43	38	78	69	83	76	135	132
2	No. Exchanges (Mood Telos)	27	32	54	63	74	69	111	106
3	No. Exchanges (Appraisal Telos)	16	6	24	16	9	7	24	26
4	No. Shifts A → M Telos	6		12		7		8	
5	No. Shifts M → A Telos	1		0		0		0	

# Conclusions

- Naturalness is sequentially construed through interplay of MT and AT on horizontal dimension of fictional dialogue.
- Prefabricated orality relies primarily on mood telos, interspersed with realistic conversation (driven by appraisal telos).
- Dubbed conversation involves shifts from appraisal telos (in the source text) to mood telos (in the target dialogue).



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