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In this, his major work to date, Herbert Clark sets out the thesis that language use is really a form of joint action. A joint action is one that is carried out by an ensemble of people acting in coordination with each other. Language use is thus more than the sum of a speaker speaking and a listener listening. It is the joint action that emerges when speakers and listeners – writers and readers – perform their individual actions in coordination, as ensembles. In contrast to work within the cognitive sciences, which has seen language use as an individual process, and to work within the social sciences, which has seen it as a social process, the author argues strongly that language use embodies both individual and social processes.

This book will be essential reading for all students and researchers interested in the ways in which language operates in its human and social context.

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Preface

Writing a book can be like visiting a famous old city. You arrive with a copy of the *Guide Michelin* and begin touring the recommended sights. But as you walk from one landmark to the next, you discover the city beyond the *Guide*. Some features don't have the beauty or authenticity described in the *Guide*, and others aren't in the *Guide* at all. In one district, you find an exciting new style of architecture, and in another, an experiment in urban ecology. In still another, you come upon a new community of immigrants, complete with its own markets, restaurants, and religious activities. As you go from place to place, you meet more and more residents, who seduce you into extending your stay. By the time you leave, you realize that the city is just not what you expected. It is richer, more sophisticated, more diverse, and it took your visit to discover that.

Writing this book has been just such an experience. I am indebted to many for making it such an exciting, constructive, pleasurable, and prolonged experience. I wish to thank a great many collaborators for guiding me through new areas and expanding my horizons: Bridget Bly, Susan Brennan, Sam Buttrick, Stuart Card, Thomas Carlson, Jean Fox Tree, Ellen Francik, Wade French, Richard Gerrig, Ellen Isaacs, Barbara Malt, Catherine Marshall, Daniel Morrow, Gregory Murphy, Gisela Redeker, Edward Schaefer, Michael Schober, Robert Schreuder, Elizabeth Shriberg, Dale Schunk, Vicki Smith, Heather Stark, Elizabeth Wade, Thomas Wasow, Steve Whittaker, Deanna Wilkes-Gibbs. I owe a special debt to Randi Engle, Pim Levelt, Gisela Redeker, and Michael Schober for commenting on an earlier draft of the book and instigating fundamental changes in it. I credit Michael Schober with implanting the ideas that delayed the book the longest. Finally, the book wouldn't be what it is without Eve Clark, who has been the ideal companion on all my travels.

For the preparation of this book, I am indebted financially to the National Science Foundation, the Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Center for the Study of Language and Information at Stanford University, and, especially, the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

Note on examples

A book about language use wouldn't be comprehensible without examples of spontaneous speech, so I have appealed to authentic examples wherever I could. Most of them are from the London–Lund corpus, a corpus of British English conversation collected and transcribed by Jan Svartvik, Randolph Quirk, and the Survey of English Usage at University College London and the Survey of Spoken English at the University of Lund (Svartvik and Quirk, 1980).¹ I have identified these examples by their text numbers (e.g., 1.1) and tone unit numbers (e.g., 245) like this: (1.1.245). The original transcripts represent tone units, intonation, overlapping speech, pauses, and many other features of spontaneous conversation. For readability, I have retained only some of these features, as illustrated here (1.1.245):

Reynard: so it's not until - next year that *the job will be advertised,*
 Sam: *January I suppose there* may be an interview round
 about January,
 Reynard: yeah, - u:m you heard anything about this, .
 Sam: nothing at all yet, --

This example contains the five special symbols:

Feature	Symbol	Example
End of tone unit	,	yeah,
Brief pause (of one light foot)	.	about this, . nothing
Unit pause (of one stress unit)	-	until - next year
Overlapping speech	*x* *y*	*the job will be advertised* *January I suppose there*
Elongated vowel	:	u:m

Overlapping speech, for example, is represented by two stretches of text enclosed by pairs of asterisks. Sam's "January I suppose there" overlaps with Reynard's "the job will be advertised." When there might be confusion, overlapping speech is enclosed in double asterisks, as in "***yeah***". Speech that was inaudible, or almost inaudible, to the transcriber is enclosed in double parentheses, as in "((3 or 4 sylls.))" or "((where are you))". Other noises are enclosed in single parentheses, as in "(- snorts)". In examples cited from other investigators, I have retained

¹ For analyses based on this corpus, see Erman (1987), Garnham, Shillcock, Brown, Mill, and Cutler (1982), Geluykens (1992), Oreström (1983), Stenström (1984), and Svartvik (1980).

the original notation, though sometimes in simplified form. On occasion I have highlighted the features of interest in boldface.

It is impossible to write about using language without mentioning the users themselves. In life, these users aren't generic speakers and addressees, but real people, with identities, genders, histories, personalities, and names. I have tried to keep this point in the foreground by giving the people in my examples names – their actual names whenever possible and fictitious names otherwise. The names serve to remind us of the subject matter of this book – that language is used by individuals at particular times and places for particular purposes.