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Settings and Interpretation: 'Umfelder' and 'Verstehen'. Text Linguistics from a Coserian Perspective

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Abstract: E. Coseriu's seminal article 'Determinación y entorno' (1955-1956) introduces a complex matrix of settings ('Umfelder') that is intended to serve as a framework for the analysis of all kinds of text and discourse. Coseriu's framework differentiates between 'situation', 'region', various 'contexts' and 'universe of discourse'. In order to determine the role of each setting in the interpretation of a specific text, the paper provides a detailed analysis of an editorial cartoon. The paper concludes by pointing out the complementarity of Coseriu's framework with alternative approaches to texts and discourse such as D. Hymes' ethnographic SPEAKING model and the (Neo-)Gricean theory of conversational implicatures.

Keywords: text linguistics; contexts; universe of discourse; conversational implicatures; editorial cartoon; multimodality research

1. Introduction[2]

Coseriu once contended that 'the whole of linguistics is hermeneutics' (in: Kabatek & Murguía, 1997, p. 151). In another text, hermeneutics is further specified. Coseriu first stresses the importance of the history of the language sciences and then invokes the 'reality of language', arguing that both are mutually reinforcing:

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> I am willing to recognize that everything of value in my writings and in my conceptions and in the methods I follow is the fruit of dialectical reworking of the reflections and of the elaborations that may be found in other linguists and philosophers of language. The ever-present touchstone in this process is the reality of language – the reality that reveals itself through reflective observation and hermeneutic meditation (Coseriu, 1995a, pp. 187-188).

Hermeneutic meditation, as a counterpart of observation, is a specific mindset, a way of conceptualising the object of the science of language and the manner in which to go about in analysing and understanding what language really *is*. One can accept the hermeneutic mindset or not, but there can be no doubt that for Coseriu it is phenomenologically grounded in the 'reality of language'. Hence the importance of the question: What is the reality of language?

Coseriu's notion of reality of language is the basis of the – at first sight for many linguists probably disconcerting – assertion that 'the whole of linguistics is hermeneutics'.[1] For Coseriu, this point of view entails two claims. Firstly, the true locus of language is the actual activity of speaking (or writing, in whatever modality): *enérgeia* in the Aristotelian sense developed by Wilhelm von Humboldt (Coseriu, 2015, II, ch. 12). Secondly, because the activity of speaking is the creative coming-into-being of *Sinn* (*sentido*), linguistics must include a hermeneutic mindset. All other levels of language (norms and the language system) are by definition abstractions with regard to discourse/texts: they disengage language from its primordial origin in the activity of speaking for the sake of necessarily partial linguistic investigations.

In his *Textlinguistik* (2007 [1980], p. 45), Coseriu writes: 'the text is altogether the most complex level of language overall (*des Sprachlichen überhaupt*)' (my translation, KW). This complexity stems from the fact that in texts (or, more generally: in discourse) all aspects of the activity of speaking are potentially present/realized/'in use', hence texts are by definition complex phenomena. The activity of speaking in this comprehensive sense entails for Coseriu that texts cannot be approached adequately in a bottom-up approach ('transphrastically', from the perspective of the language-specific systems and norms, *cf.* Coseriu, 2007 [1988], ch. 3), but instead must be approached from the vantage point of the entire spectrum of settings (Sp. *entornos*, G. *Umfelder*) in which texts/discourses are produced and understood. And because much of what the settings contribute is intuitively and

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[1] A number of other linguists have developed thoughts on the relationship between linguistics and hermeneutics that are similar to those of Coseriu, albeit with notable differences, but this is not the subject of this paper.

partly tacitly shared among speakers/listeners, text linguistics is bound to be a hermeneutic enterprise.

In yet another article, Coseriu explains that hermeneutics, understood as the study of the 'sense making' of texts/discourses, involves two fundamental principles. The first hermeneutic principle is the obligation to be objective: one has to interpret a text or message in such a manner as to be faithful to the intention of the author/speaker. Occasionally this obligation can be dynamic: in that case, one has to try to interpret and understand a text in a way better than the author/speaker. The second hermeneutic principle entails, according to Coseriu, that one has to strive for an interpretation (*Verstehen*) that is sympathetic, with a view to finding out what is truthful in a text, even if the text may contain errors and inaccuracies (Coseriu, 1995b, p. 73).

The requirement that interpretation be both objective and sympathetic applies to scholarly texts and ordinary language discourse alike. In this paper, I will zoom in on an early study by Coseriu in which he outlines his approach to the study of the functioning of texts: 'Determinación y entorno. Dos problemas de una lingüistica del hablar' (1955-1956). In particular, I will focus on the notion *entorno/Umfeld* and its importance for text-linguistic investigations. The Spanish word *entorno* is Coseriu's translation of K. Bühler's notion *Umfeld* (Bühler, 1934, ch. 10). I adopt the English word *setting*, which is also the translation of *entorno* in the well-known introduction to text linguistics by de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981, pp. 21-22).

This paper is organised as follows. In Section 2, I introduce Coseriu's article 'Determinación y entorno', followed by a brief presentation of the four settings Coseriu distinguishes. In Section 3, I analyse an editorial cartoon in order to determine the role of each setting in the interpretation of a specific text. Section 4 turns to the question how to further develop Coseriu's approach based on some recent insights in the analysis of texts and discourse, particularly from the viewpoint of the ethnography of speaking and the (Neo-)Gricean theory of conversational implicatures. In the concluding Section 5, I summarise the specificity of Coseriu's approach and point out its complementarity with other approaches.

2. 'Determinación y entorno' (1955-1956)

2.1. As early as 1955-1956, Coseriu published an article in which he outlines in considerable detail his approach to text linguistics. 'Determinación y entorno' was part of an extensive manuscript on the theory of proper names, other parts of which were also published as separate articles. 'Determinación y entorno' was republished several times, in particular in *Teoría del lenguaje y lingüística general. Cinco estudios* (Madrid: Gredos, 1962). Parts of the article were also reprised in *Textlinguistik* (1980, 4th edition 2007). The latter book covers all facets of Coseriu's text-linguistic approach: the meaning of a text (*Sinn*, *sentido*) emerges from the combination of Bühler's famous three functions – i.e. representation (G. *Darstellung*), expression (*Kundgabe*) and appeal (*Appell*) – in combination with evocation (Coseriu, 2007 [1980], p. 137). While Bühler's Organon model of communication (Bühler 1933 and 1934) has been widely known for a long time, Coseriu relies on the lesser-known work of W. Urban (1939) for the notion of evocation, which he considerably expands and deepens (*cf.* Munteanu, 2019). In order to arrive at a comprehensive account of the meaning of a text, it is necessary to incorporate both a bottom-up approach to linguistic signs as parts of texts in terms of language-specific structures (Coseriu, 2007 [1980], p. 220) and a top-down approach to the content of any one particular text conceived of as an object of hermeneutical analysis with an ultimately irreducible individuality (Coseriu, 2007 [1980], ch. 2).

'Determinación y entorno' is a succinct outline of a vast research programme in which Coseriu adumbrates how to investigate the 'technique of speaking' with respect to the functioning of texts/discourse. The term 'determination' refers to a wide array of operations and instruments that allow speakers to put the virtual signs of language to use, to speak about something, to ensure reference (Sp. *referir*), i.e. to actualise signs in language use, discriminate between entities, quantify them, select entities, situate, delimit and identify them. Coseriu proposes a complex grid of conceptual distinctions that makes a fine-grained analysis of referring expressions possible (compare, e.g., Willems 1996, in which the grid is applied to proper names in German). Conversely, setting (*entorno*, *Umfeld*) is a cover term for all the conditions speakers draw upon with regard to the circumstances, broadly construed, in which the activity of speaking takes place (*tenga un fondo*, i.e. the background of discourse and texts). Coseriu again proposes a complex grid of distinctions that goes beyond all previous theories of context and the role context plays in communication (or languaging, as it is now often called, i.e. the multifaceted discursive practices

speakers deploy in the activity of speaking, which in Coseriu's approach amounts to producing 'texts').

Coseriu's outline is based on many historical sources and the work of several predecessors: the tradition of ancient rhetoric, hermeneutics, various modern studies on text and context, Bühler's observations on the importance of three types of settings, viz. 'synsemantisches, sympraktisches und symphysisches Umfeld' (Bühler, 1934, ch. 10), Urban's notion of 'universe of discourse' (Urban, 1939, pp. 197-199), among many other sources. With his framework of four settings – situation, region, context and universe of discourse, see below – Coseriu surpasses previous studies both in breadth and depth of analysis. The merits of the framework outlined by Coseriu have never been fully appreciated and its potential and importance for text-linguistic research – of communicative texts as well as literary texts – have not received the attention they deserve. This is also explicitly mentioned in one of the few appraisals of Coseriu's seminal study in the English scholarly literature:

> 23. Eugenio Coseriu's study of 'determination and setting' is based on entirely different considerations [as compared to those in the work of Zellig S. Harris; KW]. He asserts that research on language demands the investigation not only of speakers' knowledge of a language, but also of techniques for converting linguistic knowledge into linguistic activity. He employs the notion of 'determination' to show how word meanings can be applied, e.g. via 'discrimination' (picking among possible referents of an expression), 'delimitation' (singling out certain aspects of meaning), and 'actualisation' (making potential knowledge currently active), each of these having subtypes dealing with identities, individualities, quantities, class inclusions, specifications, distinctions, and specializations. He then presents an elaborate classification of 'settings' ('entornos') based on such factors as cultural, social, cognitive, and historical surroundings, degree of mediation between text and situation, and range of content being addressed.

> 24. It is indeed lamentable that Coseriu's proposals went unheeded at the time. The issues he raised are only now being recognized as significant for the empirical study of meaningful communication. Units of content are not fixed particles with a stable identity, but rather fuzzy agglomerates sensitive to the conditions of their usage. Some of the bizarre side effects of subsequent attempts to describe language isolated from its uses and functions might have been averted if Coseriu's ideas had been accorded the attention they merited. (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, pp. 21-22)

'Determinación y entorno' may seem abstract, theoretical, overloaded with distinctions and ultimately inscrutable to many scholars. It is true that the text is dense and replete with subtle distinctions, but on closer inspection these are without exception phenomenologically motivated in the reality of language, the activity of speaking. The prejudice that the compact part on the four settings in the framework outlined by Coseriu might not be applicable to concrete data, is unwarranted. In this paper, I therefore apply the aforementioned strategy of sympathetic interpretation to Coseriu's own text. Coseriu's framework actually provides us with an embarrassment of riches in terms of concepts and distinctions that are key when trying to reconstruct the settings of a particular text in order to account for its meaning (*Sinn*, *sentido*) from a hermeneutic perspective.

2.2. I now introduce the four settings (*cf*. Coseriu, 1955-1956, pp. 45-51). My presentation at this stage is sketchy, the fleshing-out is done in the detailed case study of a particular text in the next section.

The **situation** is the *hic et nunc* of the discourse, it can either be direct (immediate) or indirect (mediate). The direct situation is the spatiotemporal domain in which a specific discourse or text is constructed and interpreted. Regarding the indirect context, Coseriu stresses the role of proper names as anchoring devices in a particular discourse or text. The **region** is defined as the space in which a sign functions. There are three subtypes of region. A *zone* is the traditional realm of usage of linguistic signs, e.g. terminology and jargon as opposed to every-day colloquial language. An ***area*** (*ámbito*) is the horizon of experience regarding the objects designated by linguistic signs, e.g. the domain of ordinary language vs. technical language. One can, for example, refer to the use of words like *flu* and *influenza*: whereas the technical term *influenza* customarily designates a well-defined inflectional disease, the in ordinary language widely used *flu* commonly refers to an illness caused by a virus of which the symptoms resemble those of influenza to some degree (sore throat, cough, general weakness, tiredness and so forth), even if influenza in the technical sense is not the cause. Finally, an ***environment*** (*ambiente*) is the socio-cultural space of a sign, e.g. the family, professional milieu, school, etc.

According to Coseriu, there are three kinds of **context**, a tripartition that mirrors what is generally adopted in current theories of context. There is first of all the ***language-specific context*** (*contexto idiomático*), including lexical fields, various associative relations (formal and semantic) and all other pertinent relations that make up the network of linguistic signs to which every single linguistic sign belongs. Secondly, the ***speech context*** (*contexto verbal*) is what nowadays is commonly
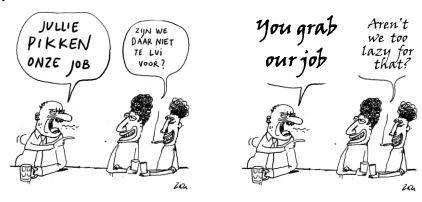
called the cotext, i.e. the elements that surround a linguistic sign in discourse, both preceding and following it in the text. Within the speech context, a distinction between direct (immediate) cotext and indirect (mediate) cotext (i.e. the whole of the text) as well as a distinction between a positive cotext (what is said) and a negative cotext (what is not said, viz. suggestions, allegations, insinuations, allusions etc.) are necessary. Finally, there is the ***extralinguistic context*** (*contexto extraverbal*), which in Coseriu's matrix is carefully subdivided into six subtypes. The physical, i.e. sensorial, context is decisive for all expressions that bring about immediate deixis (such as reference to the here and now). The larger empirical, i.e. non-sensorial, context accounts for reference that is not immediate but nevertheless relatively direct (e.g., reference to someone or something located 'on the third floor' from the point of view of the speaker). The natural context involves everything that can be considered shared experiential knowledge (e.g., concerning celestial objects such as the sun and the moon), whereas the practical context concerns the occasion of the discourse (compare, e.g., utterances such *Two whole wheats, please!* in a bakery or *It's cold!* when one is leaving the house on a cold day). The historical context is either particular (concerning a single person, a particular family, a certain community or nation, etc.) or universal, and it is either contemporary (*the pope*) or past (*the Great War*). Finally, the cultural context comprises everything that pertains to traditions in human societies, broadly construed, and is thus a generalized form of historical context in terms of knowledge, habits, customs and values.

The fourth setting is the **universe of discourse**. The term is adopted from Urban (1939, pp. 197-199). It refers to the system of linguistic meanings (it is hence a 'limited universe', Urban, 1939, p. 198) to which a specific text/discourse belongs and which in turn determines its meaning and its truthfulness, e.g. the world of everyday experience, literature and poetry, mythology, sciences (mathematics, physical sciences, social sciences) and so forth.

3. Case Study: An Editorial Cartoon

To determine the role and function of each setting in the interpretation of a specific text, I now turn to a case study. According to Coseriu, careful consideration of the four different settings is important with regard to grammar (theoretical and descriptive grammar as well as the analysis of texts), literary theory and the overall theory of language. In what follows, I restrict my attention to the following question: How applicable and useful are Coseriu's distinctions in the empirical analysis of a

specific type of text which at the same time is multidimensional, multi-modal and multi-layered, viz. an editorial cartoon published in a newspaper (*cf.* Stöckl, 2014, for a brief overview of key topics in multimodality research). As an example consider the following cartoon in Dutch by the Flemish cartoonist Zaza (pseudonym of Klaas Storme), which appeared shortly after the turn of the century in the Flemish newspaper *De Standaard*. On the left is the original cartoon in Dutch, on the right my translation.

The first thing to note when applying Coseriu's matrix of four settings is the genuinely hermeneutic character of the scholarly pursuit to which it aims to contribute. As well as the need to consider the shared preliminary knowledge and to profile the focus of attention against a tacitly accepted background (Sp. *fondo*) of settings, it is a challenge to approach the settings in such a way as to avoid any reductivist account of only a small number of them and to reveal the text as the locus of the activity of speaking in the comprehensive sense described in Section 1: settings are not only necessarily present but they also make it possible that the text 'goes beyond' (*mas allá*) what is said and even goes beyond the language itself. For this to be possible we need a comprehensive text-linguistic framework such as the one outlined by Coseriu, which allows us to interpret (*verstehen*) the content of a text or discourse, i.e. to assign its *Sinn* its proper place in the dialogue between people (*cf.* Trabant, 1975) – even if the limits of such a dialogue are at the very centre of the text, as in the present cartoon.

Let us now go through Coseriu's settings in order to establish what is tacitly accepted (as background, base) and what is made explicit (in focus, profiled). For reasons of convenience, I will run through the various settings in Coseriu's grid in reverse order, starting off with the most encompassing among them, the universe of discourse, and successively proceeding to the specific ones.

3.1. Universe of Discourse

We are dealing with an editorial or, as it is sometimes called, political cartoon. The text genre of political cartoons is based on the complementarity and interdependence of image and written language. It has been practiced for centuries, with an increasing popularity since the 18th century. An editorial cartoon usually comprises both drawings (occasionally caricatures) and written language, but written language can be entirely absent. Editorial cartoons are a favourite means to air all kinds of (social, political, cultural, ideological) criticism and often include satire, pointedly expressed observations and various kinds of humour. 'The best cartoonists', Cathcart & Klein (2018, p. xiii) write, 'are keen observers of the state of our society, its quirks and ironies'.

Each text genre is traditionally associated with a particular sphere of truthfulness (veracity), a universe of discourse of its own, as Coseriu (1955-1956, p. 51) calls it. A distinctive feature of editorial cartoons is that the characters are typified, which is also evident in this cartoon: the white man native to Belgium or Flanders is contrasted with the immigrant/foreigner/refugee from 'the South'. The requirements of the text genre also entail that the interlocutors are engaged in a truthful discourse which is generic and exemplary, within the confines of the particular instantiation of the text genre editorial cartoon. For example, it does not matter that not all men in pubs talk like the persons in the cartoon, a generality fallacy inhibited from the outset due to the genre-specific conventions associated with the text.

3.2. Context

Recall that in Coseriu's analytical framework there are three types of context: the extralinguistic context, the speech context and the language-specific context.

3.2.1. The Extralinguistic Context

Knowledge of the cultural context is an essential prerequisite to understand the cartoon. It comprises the traditional presence of people commonly referred to as foreigners or foreign workers in northern Europe, who have played a decisive role in the prosperity of a country like Belgium after World War II. Moreover, 'the foreigner' in this cultural context is not someone from, e.g., the USA, Scandinavia or Australia but from Africa and the Middle East, which in the present cartoon is inferable from the physical appearance of the two men to the right.

The larger historical context is also presupposed and a necessary element of the shared knowledge on which the cartoon builds, in particular the growing tension between Christians and Muslims since the phases of economic recession in the 1970s – 1980s (in Belgium and Europe generally). At first warmly welcomed, foreign workers from Muslim countries have been increasingly under attack, in particular by right wing groups and political parties (e.g. in Flanders). The controversial historical discourse of foreigners vilified as freeloaders (in colloquial Flemish Dutch typically labelled *profiteurs*) who have been coming to Belgium/Flanders to take advantage of economic opportunities, generous state support and social welfare is deeply entrenched in racist public talk and informal debates.

The practical context may be said to have two main dimensions in the case of the cartoon under discussion. On the one hand, there is the objective practical context presented and depicted as the subject of the cartoon: an older native man addresses two younger foreigners in a face-to-face interaction. It may be assumed that the interlocutors are strangers when they meet at the counter of a pub. On the other hand, at the level of the meta-practical context there is the conversation between a well-known cartoonist (artist name: Zaza, see bottom right corner), reputed for being a critical commentator in high-profile Flemish and Dutch newspapers, and the public, the media consumers. As a matter of fact, the name Zaza immediately opens up a horizon of expectations (in the sense promoted by scholars such as H.-G. Gadamer and H. R. Jauss in the tradition of hermeneutic reception theory) which is tacitly recognized by most readers. An important facet of this second, meta-practical context is the controversy, since ca. 2000 (around the time of publication of the cartoon), between those critical of immigration and those who pointed to the dangers of narrowing policy priorities to single issues such as immigration. Since the turn of the century, Flanders was hit by the highest unemployment rate since years (ca. 6%; compare 2019, when it amounted to only ca. 3%). Increasing unemployment in particular sparked the public debate on unemployment benefits (which are not limited in time in Belgium) for immigrants.

The natural context is only indirectly involved, due to the text genre. It might be said to relate, in this text, to the activities people perform as human beings, including eating, drinking, working (compare the explicit reference to jobs) and so forth. By contrast, the empirical context is much more profiled. It concerns those conditions that are taken for granted but that are not immediately observable in discourses and texts, in this cartoon particularly the assumption that the two younger men live and work in Belgium/Flanders.

Finally, the physical context, i.e. the immediately observable reality of the discourse/text, is readily accessible: the dialogue takes place at the counter of a pub (typical of Flanders/Belgium: *het café*) where people meet (or are supposed to meet). There is one person with a beer (again typical of Flanders/Belgium, beer is the national drink, the country produces more than 1500 types of beer). The large beer glass of the native man contrasts perspicuously with the plain smaller glasses of the two younger men, more than likely a reference to their stance on alcohol.

The analysis so far brings to light a hierarchical ordering of the contexts distinguished in Coseriu's matrix of settings: the direct physical and empirical contexts further qualify, and in part specify, the partly indirect cultural, historical, practical and natural contexts. These are all general existential presuppositions (G. *Präsuppositionen des Sprechens im Allgemeinen*, Coseriu, 2007 [1980], p. 230). They have to be distinguished from so-called text presuppositions (*Textpräsuppositionen*), which are transmitted by language.

3.2.2. The Speech Context

As pointed out before, a characteristic feature of editorial cartoons is the interaction between drawings and written words, the latter often being few in number. There are some notable aspects in this regard. First of all, while the cartoon's visual mode is based on simultaneity, the directionality of its verbal mode must be acknowledged: the two utterances are read in the order from left to right, reflecting the direction of writing (itself part of the cultural context). The utterance of the person at the left (*Jullie pikken onze job* 'You (pl.) grab our job') precedes the other utterance (*Zijn we daar niet te lui voor?* 'Aren't we too lazy for that?'). Secondly, of equally pivotal importance is the relation between the positive speech context (what is actually being said) and the negative speech context (what is not said). This relation yields a tension which in turn gives rise to suggestions, insinuations: instead of a straightforward reaction to the allegation, the two young men respond by means of a question. This question is obviously a rhetorical question, not so much because of the limitation of the single frame cartoon (a question normally triggers an answer, which however is lacking in the cartoon), but because the question constitutes, to all intents and purposes, an answer disguised as a question. A rhetorical question is a prime example of how a sentence function and a text function may diverge (*cf.* Coseriu 2007 [1980], p. 229): the sentence *Zijn we daar niet te lui voor?* 'Aren't we too lazy for that?' has the form of a question but its function is that of an assertion. The rhetorical question serves yet another purpose of non-disclosure. The two men to the right do not respond directly to the allegation: by uttering a (rhetorical) question, they keep secret

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something they could have said in response to the allegation. This is an example of a negative speech context: not saying something is as functional and important as the positive speech context (what is said) and it moreover falls within the purview of intentional discourse (not the other way round): 'el silencio, la suspensión intencional de la actividad verbal' (Coseriu, 1955-1956, p. 34).

3.2.3. The Language-Specific Context

The original cartoon is in Dutch. The two utterances *Jullie pikken onze job* 'You (pl.) grab our job' and *Zijn we daar niet te lui voor?* 'Aren't we too lazy for that?' have language-specific properties whose specific contribution to the overall text meaning of the cartoon must be established. According to Coseriu, every linguistic sign in a specific text or discourse possesses a systematic function within the system of oppositions and associations of a particular language (*langue*). Two observations are in order with regard to this cartoon. The interlocutors obviously share the same language but there are 'diaphasic' differences (Coseriu, 2007 [1988], pp. 24-26, 141) that bring to the fore an unexpected contrast. The informal utterance of the man with the beer contrasts with the utterance of the two younger men, which strikes the reader as distinguished, with carefully chosen words and syntax. There is no sign of informal speech in their turn, in contrast to the speech of the native man (which is also loud, as signalled by the larger pitch of the characters). The language-specific context thus serves as a basis to create a second tension in the actual dialogue: the man to the left, who may assume a socially superior position as a native of the country, expresses himself in an informal register (style), in tune with his obvious bad temper, whereas the two foreigners make use of a more formal register of the same language. The tension emerging from this language-specific contrast is a major part of the subtle satirical edge and overall comical effect of the cartoon.

3.3. Setting: Region

The region is the space in which a sign functions. Whereas the language-specific context relates to the actual discourse/text, the region specifies the place of any one sign within a particular language system (or subsystem), including the normal, conventionalized instantiations of the elements and structures the system provides for. Of course, because the activity of speaking is the vantage point of the entire analysis (see Section 1), the region is typically compounded, with the categories that Coseriu subsumes under the setting region instantiated in every text and discourse. There are three regions: zone, area and environment.

Regarding the zone, i.e. the traditional realm of usage of linguistic signs, it bears pointing out, firstly, that the man to the left addresses the two men to the right with *jullie* ('you'), the second person plural pronoun, in combination with an indexical pointing gesture. The pronoun *jullie* is normally used when interlocutors are familiar with each other (the corresponding singular form is *je* 'you'). *Jullie* contrasts with the formal pronoun *U* ('you'), which neutralizes the difference between singular and plural in Dutch. Secondly, the Dutch verb *pikken* ('grab') is highly register-specific. *Pikken* literally means 'to peck by means of a beak' (or, by extension, a sharp tool) but the verb is also used figuratively to refer to 'steal' in informal speech (compare verbs like *grab* or *snatch* in English), which is the case in this cartoon. By using this stylistically marked verb, the speaker signals a disparaging, derogatory attitude vis-à-vis the two men who are probably foreign workers. The utterance *Jullie pikken onze job* thus channels a strong connotation: the stealing is done in a sly, particularly sneaky, insidious fashion. By contrast, the polite answer and the figure of speech (rhetorical question) it contains signal that the two foreigners are obviously well-educated and well-mannered. Their reply moreover eschews a direct address of the interlocutor but is instead directed to themselves as speakers and hence reflexive. Purely from a linguistic standpoint, the reply signals that the two men have complete mastery of the native language of the man who blames them for stealing jobs to which to his mind natives are entitled. The utterance of the native can therefore be described as zone-consistent: his use of an informal register of the Dutch language, with the verb *pikken* at the fulcrum of his offensively coarse, direct utterance (in a pub, the man is probably intoxicated), dovetails with a specific mindset that reflects the traditional usage of this kind of uncouth language. By contrast, the stylistically high-profile language of the two men charged of stealing jobs is zone-inconsistent and accordingly unexpected (formal register).

The zone consistency and inconsistency of the two parties in the dialogue have an immediate bearing on the performance of the interlocutors in terms of politeness (or rather, tact, *cf.* Leech, 2014). The expression of unbridled anger by the man to the left takes place in a highly impolite manner. It contrasts sharply with the reaction by the two men to the right. Their rhetorical question in return is almost anodyne, the allegation does not meet with an equally impolite rebuff. The two men who are verbally assaulted react politely, with an utterance that is not for nothing longer than the short accusation it responds to: 'The more polite the register, the longer the message' (Haiman, 1985, p. 151). Politeness is not a separate category to be found anywhere in Coseriu's framework of settings. This might be surprising given the enormous attention paid to politeness in the literature on pragmatics,

sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis since the 1970s and 1980s (*cf.* Lakoff, 1973; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech 1983, 2014; Kienpointner, ed. 1999, but also earlier seminal work by Goffman, 1967 on 'face' in social interaction). However, the field of politeness research is fraught with problems. A focal point of controversy in the current literature on politeness has been the question to what extent principles of politeness are either guided by interactional universals, which are neither culture-specific nor language-specific, or by more specific sociocultural conventions, traditions and culture-bound standards – or by both. I contend that Coseriu would side with neither approach, given his focus on a levelled approach to language in which the universal, the language-specific and the discourse/text-specific all assume their proper place (*cf.* Coseriu 1985, 2007 [1988]) and his life-long endeavour to observe the distinction between linguistic investigations proper and extralinguistic matters that are the subject of sociological, anthropological, ethical and psychological enquiries (to which investigations of politeness inevitably belong to a considerable extent, beyond the universal/sociocultural divide; *cf.* Coseriu, 1956, pp. 52-53 and 2019, pp. 46-47). Given Coseriu's reservations about politeness as a 'secondary' subject of linguistic research and his alternative views regarding 'speech acts' (Coseriu, 2007 [1980], pp. 61, 228), it remains a matter of contention as to how his framework of settings, if at all, might be extended to matters of politeness (but see Schrott, 2021, in which the author incorporates aspects of modern politeness theories into Coseriu's layered approach to linguistic competence).

The area (*ámbito*) is the horizon of experience regarding the objects designated by means of linguistic signs. A salient feature of the cartoon is the reference to jobs, but also its correlate: laziness, idleness. In the Western world and the Christian cultural tradition, work is a natural attribute of man, the default relative to doing nothing: doing nothing is the exception or special case in need of clarification, whereas being employed is the norm (and generally presupposed). At the same time, jobs are considered precious and threatened. The text of the cartoon refers, albeit indirectly, to the area of unemployment (whereas the visual representation alternatively refers to the area of migration, displaced persons, etc.). The focus on jobs is contrasted with idleness from a specific horizon of experience: migrants are often stereotypically characterized as lazy, opposing the Western tradition of diligence and industriousness. This is again a presupposition, more precisely a commonplace, which the rhetorical question ingeniously undermines.

The environment (*ambiente*), i.e. the socio-cultural space in which the discourse takes place, is highly functional in the cartoon. A pub is commonly regarded as a

place where people come together to enjoy a drink or a snack and exchange views and opinions, regardless of social status, wealth or background. In this cartoon, it is the place where a native and two foreigners meet, but the dismissive attitude by the native contrasts with the courteous, obliging attitude of the foreigners, yet their smiling signals intellectual superiority. This salient contrast counteracts the in principle equal relation between the interlocutors, assuming that in the physical context of a brief encounter in a pub there is, if only momentarily, no a priori asymmetric relation of power, prestige and social order (in terms of politeness theory, *cf.* Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The regional status of the contrast between 'our' (*onze*) and 'you' (*jullie*, reprised by *we* in the rejoinder) deserves special mention. The corresponding zones of the pronouns serve to delimit the areas of their normal usages in an environment where strangers meet. While the native confirms the stereotypical contrast between 'our' and 'you' with his allegation that jobs are stolen from the native people, the foreigners undercut the allegation in a playful manner by invoking the realm of 'we strangers' with respect to the opposite of pursuing a job, viz. being lazy, already identified as a commonplace about immigrants.

3.4. Setting: Situation

The situation concerns the here and now of the discourse. It is the direct (immediate) situation that is decisive in the cartoon: not only does the discourse take place between interlocutors present in the same room (a pub), the cartoon itself appeared at a time (at the start of the 21st century) when unemployment figures and immigration were both rising, along with the consistently growing success of the right-wing populist political party *Vlaams Belang* (*Vlaams Blok* until 2004) in the Flemish part of Belgium. The situation is also involved in the form of deixis: *jullie* 'you' (plural) is strongly deictic, the native man furthermore signals by means of the gesture with his index finger that he means the two men in the room. The use of the present indicative (*pikken* 'steal') adds to the immediate deictic anchoring in the speech situation. Given the text genre of a political cartoon, *Jullie pikken onze job* can alternatively be construed as weakly deictic, with *jullie* meant to convey 'all of you', thus transcending the immediate situatedness of the cartoon's message. The two foreigners reply by using *we*, which can refer to only the two of them (strong deixis) or to all people in a similar situation indiscriminately (weak deixis). The latter, generic interpretation mirrors the interpretability of *jullie* ('all of you') as a

generic pronoun in the first utterance. Thus, under the generic interpretation, the indirect (mediate) situation comes into play as well, if only obliquely: the native man speaks for all like-minded native persons, while the foreigners speak for all their fellow men who are in a similar situation in Belgium/Flanders at the time the cartoon is published.

4. Extending Coseriu's Framework

Now that the applicability and relevance of Coseriu's framework of 'settings' has been demonstrated, a few questions arise, two of which I would like to address in this section. Firstly, what other frameworks are equally suited to an analysis of the cartoon along similar lines? Secondly, are there issues that are not explicitly addressed in an account that takes Coseriu's matrix of settings as guideline so that it would benefit from further developing and elaborating it?

There are several frameworks that focus on the relation between linguistic signs and various kinds of 'context' with a view to determine how discourse or texts function in specific circumstances. By and large (admittedly simplifying things), there are two strands of research, i.e. two alternative perspectives:

– frameworks that focus on the functions of the various linguistic signs in discourse/texts (bottom-up),

– frameworks that focus on discourse/texts as a relatively autonomous layer of language (top-down).

Among the frameworks that focus on the functions of the various linguistic signs in discourse/texts, one can think of K. Bühler's Organon model (with its three already mentioned well-known functions, *cf.* Section 2.1.), R. Jakobson's elaboration of Bühler's initial model (with six functions of language 'in communication', Jakobson 1960), M.A.K. Halliday's systemic-functional model of metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2014), Ch. Fillmore's Frame Semantics (formerly 'scenes and frames' semantics, with functions of signs conceptualized in terms of an encyclopaedic 'semantics of understanding', Fillmore, 1982, 1985), among others. Different perspectives and foci are also found in frameworks that focus on discourse/texts as a relatively autonomous layer of language, e.g. in D. Hymes' SPEAKING model (Hymes, 1974) and the various Neo-Gricean models of linguistic pragmatics. As mentioned in Section 3.3., for all their sophistication, I consider the various theories of politeness as belonging to another strand of research altogether which is actually orthogonal to the original objectives of Coseriu's framework. Yet these theories, too,

are complementary to Coseriu's framework, as are several other approaches grounded in anthropology, social theory, theories of power and ideology (e.g., Critical Discourse Analysis, see in particular Fairclough, 2014, ch. 5-7), etc. (*cf.* Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000 for a succinct overview). I do not further pursue this issue here and prefer to dwell on two frameworks that focus on discourse/texts in the aforementioned top-down fashion.

D. Hymes' famous and – in contrast to Coseriu's framework – widely used SPEAKING model provides a complex template for the study of various types of discourse from the point of view of interactional linguistics (Hymes, 1974). The SPEAKING model has arguably been the most popular tool in the sociolinguistic study of conversations (referred to as 'ethnography of speaking') over the last decades. Hymes' SPEAKING model and Coseriu's framework of settings put forward different emphases in the analysis of texts/discourses. Hymes focuses on a large array of factors that determine conversational practices with a view to studying the wider sociological and psychological functions they serve. Some of the factors also figure, at least in part, in Coseriu's grid of settings.

The factors in Hymes' model can be briefly summarized as follows. **Setting** (time, place and physical circumstances) and **Scene** (psychological and cultural characteristics of a speech event) determine what kind of speech is appropriate (e.g., is code-switching allowed or not?), norms of turn-taking, etc. Setting and scene constitute a tacit background (norms and expectations) interlocutors tend to know and respect. The factor **Participants** takes into account different kinds of interlocutors, but also of audience. Particular emphasis is placed on asymmetrical relations: adults–children, employers–employees, etc. **Ends** refers to the diverse purposes and outcomes of a speech event. The **Act Sequence** is the order of speech acts in a speech event, including the functions of turn-taking and interrupting (e.g. in the classroom). Under **Key** Hymes subsumes the factors that establish the tone or spirit of the speech acts in a speech event. Different keys are used in different situations (compare, e.g., birthday parties and funerals). Different kinds of intonation are also part of the key (which Coseriu would probably assign to an altogether different 'science of expression', *cf.* Coseriu, 1955-1956, p. 34), for instance the expression of emotions, humour, etc. **Instrumentalities** are the channels used for the speech act (speaking, writing, sign language, signalling), the language, the dialect, the specific register(s), etc., in short the 'forms and styles of speech' (Hymes). **Norms** govern the speech event and the participants' actions, they vary according to different speech communities, e.g. interruption, turn-taking, pitch,

speed, pauses, the role of gender. Finally, **Genre** is the factor that distinguishes formal language from everyday conversation, an interview, an oral exam, a discussion among politicians, a joke, gossip and so forth.

Coseriu's framework can be easily applied to all kinds of text and discourse. Hymes' SPEAKING model can undoubtedly be used to largely the same effect, even if longer stretches of dialogue are its main area of investigation. Hymes' model is centrally concerned with the dynamics of verbal interactions in spoken language ('speech events') and the construction – or, conversely, disarrangement – of social and psychological relations between discourse interactants. The model accordingly gives pride of place to asymmetrical relations between interlocutors, the constitutive role of turn-taking in dialogues, the dynamic creation of meaning on the fly and a whole range of extralinguistic ends. The ethnographic approach also pays attention to so-called repairs in conversations (ameliorating mistakes, deviations from norms etc.) and their role and effects in verbal interaction and the building or breakdown of mutual understanding. Finally, Hymes' model rightly emphasizes the constitutive role of paralinguistic features in dialogues, thus contributing significantly to overcoming the traditional biased standard of verbal mono-modality in linguistic research.

While the SPEAKING model is considerably more differentiated than Coseriu's framework with respect to these factors, Hymes' notion of context is in turn less well-developed. In particular, Coseriu's setting region is almost entirely lacking in Hymes' model, and along with that the complex, multifaceted relationship between the discourse/text and the particular language in which the discourse/text is realized. This conclusion is consistent with the fact that in Coseriu's theory of language, as well as his text linguistics, the activity of speaking is invariably conceptualized from the vantage point of its realization in a particular language – or, better still, in a number of 'languages' simultaneously (*cf.* Coseriu 2007 [1988], ch. 2) – whose rules, structures and norms constitute the necessary historical resources of any form of 'languaging'.

The Gricean and Neo-Gricean pragmatic approaches to meaning and conversational implicatures focus on yet another aspect of discourse, viz. the relationship between 'what is said' (explicitly) and 'what is meant' (implicitly) (*cf.* Grice 1975, 1981). This difference is prominent in Coseriu's framework as well. Coseriu emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between what is said ('lo que se dice') and what is expressed and understood ('lo que se expresa y se entiende', Coseriu, 1955-1956, p. 45).

Conversational implicatures are an integral part of Grice's model of communication based on the Cooperative Principle. The notion of conversational implicature hinges on the assumption that speakers intentionally flout (i.e. violate) maxims of conversation in order to convey meanings implicitly, in addition to what they say explicitly. Levinson (2000) proposes a sophisticated theory of default inferences based on the roles of the maxim of Quantity and the maxim of Manner, which provide heuristics for conveying implicit meanings above and beyond what is said. However, there are two types of conversational implicature. Generalized implicatures, the main topic of Levinson's (2000) monograph, are highly conventionalized, if still defeasible, in a speech community. By contrast, particularized implicatures are one-off inferences that are not based on routine but emerge from the always unique speech event (Levinson, 2000, pp. 12-18).

The Gricean notion of conversational implicature is particularly suited to capture an additional component of the text meaning (*Sinn*) of the cartoon under discussion which otherwise might remain unaccounted for. More specifically, particularized implicatures are involved in both the utterance of the native man and in the utterance of the two foreigners. On the one hand, the straightforward, direct outburst of the native (as mentioned above, the bigger characters suggest a vociferous scolding) flouts the maxim of Manner and to some extent, given the brevity of the utterance, also the maxim of Quantity. Likely particularized implicatures that ensue are: 'you mustn't do that'; '(in getting a job) our own people should come first' (the catchphrase of the right-wing party *Vlaams Belang*); 'I'm opposed to foreigners taking our jobs', and the like. The maxim of Quality is arguably not intentionally flouted in the native man's utterance but the cartoon undoubtedly intends to imply that his allegation is not supported by evidence and, hence, that the speaker is not committed to truthfulness.

On the other hand, the composed rhetorical question of the two young men, while indicative of a certain respect for the interlocutor, also flouts the maxim of Manner, if only contrastively. I already mentioned that their reply is intendedly longer than that of the native. The well-formed, relatively elaborate message it conveys is like an envelope that iconically signals social distancing, protecting the addressee and the addresser alike (Haiman, 1985, pp. 151-155). A whiff of banter is, as a consequence, unmistakable. Likely particularized implicatures of the utterance are: 'we foreigners are accused of being lazy but then again we are accused of stealing the jobs from the native people – it's like squaring the circle'; 'people like you are caught up in a self-contradiction'; 'people who talk like you risk to appear dim-

witted', and the like. Note that particularized conversational implicatures such as these serve the 'evocation' of implicit meanings rather than emotions (*cf*. Urban, 1939, p. 137; Munteanu, 2019, p. 116). In the case of the native man, the explicit utterance is the prime carrier of the emotional function associated with both its content and the addresser's attitude.

The theory of conversational implicatures focuses on universal maxims of linguistic activity. The relation between these maxims and their instantiation on the different levels that are defined as relatively autonomous strata in Coseriu's matrix of linguistic competence – viz, (a) universal knowledge, (b) language-specific knowledge and (c) text-specific knowledge (Coseriu, 1985, 2007 [1988]) – is not an issue in Neo-Gricean frameworks. Incidentally, Coseriu too acknowledges the role of maxims, in particular one maxim that takes pride of place in his theory of language, viz. the principle of trust or tolerance (*cf*. Munteanu, 2016). This maxim is geared towards the contents of the dialogue rather than the concomitant attitudes of the interlocutors:

> The knowledge involved in meaningful interpretation [also of the nonsensical] is a knowledge of which maxims one follows in the activity of speaking (*ein Wissen darüber, mit welchen Maximen man spricht*). One assumes certain basic principles of speaking […] i.e. one assumes in advance that the person who speaks does so coherently and meaningfully (Coseriu, 2007 [1988], p. 95; my translation, KW).

If, on the other hand, Coseriu's three-level approach is applied to the (Neo-)Gricean theory of maxims, then it becomes clear that a study of pragmatics on the universal level is not sufficient. What we need is the study of pragmatics at the universal ('elocutional') level, pragmatics at the language-specific ('idiomatic') level and pragmatics at the text-specific ('expressive') level, and of their complex interrelations (*cf*. Kabatek, 2015).

5. Conclusions

Taking stock, we may say that Coseriu's framework of settings (*entornos*, *Umfelder*) is eminently suited for the study of how discourses and texts create *Sinn* from the perspective of the activity of speaking in Coseriu's sense, i.e. language as *enérgeia* (Humboldt). The framework strikes a balance between a wide array of diverse settings, which are systematically captured in a fine-grained matrix, and close attention to the language-specific resources of producing and understanding a text or

discourse. This is in line with Coseriu's guiding principle that linguistic competence, broadly construed (*das Sprechenkönnen*), requires the knowledge of at least one particular (functional and historical) language (*funktionelle und historische Sprache*). This is pivotal to understand Coseriu's Integral Linguistics (*cf.* Willems & Munteanu, 2021, pp. 3-10). Other frameworks also provide important tools for contributions to the analysis of discourses/texts along the lines discussed in this paper, in particular frameworks that take a top-down approach similar to the one advocated by Coseriu. Given that their focus, in contrast to Coseriu's, does not lie on the interaction between the 'expressive' knowledge of texts/discourses, the language-specific, 'idiomatic' knowledge and the universal 'elocutional' knowledge of speaking in general (Coseriu, 1985, 2007 [1988]), these other frameworks are to various extents complementary to Coseriu's approach. While the focus of Hymes' SPEAKING model is on aspects of communication that are only partly of a strictly linguistic nature but to a large extent fall within the wider purview of sociology, psychology, anthropology, semiotics, cultural studies, intercultural communication and even language teaching, the (Neo-)Gricean approach to conversational implicatures seems appropriate to complement text analyses carried out according to Coseriu's theory of *Umfelder* with an additional focus on the way speakers convey implicit meanings by flouting certain maxims of conversation. Analyses of texts – including multimodal texts that interface written language with images, such as editorial cartoons – are likely to benefit from an approach that integrates various frameworks, which may have more in common than hitherto suspected.

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