

On displacement

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Abstract

Assuming a performative notion of language, this contribution addresses how language functions as a symbolic means and asks for its function for the dialogical self. In accordance with a non-individualistic notion, individuals are related to each other within and by virtue of an in-between. This in-between is called “spacetime of language”: a dynamic evolving across time, perceived as linguistic forms with their chronotopology and the positionings of the performers (self as-whom to other as-whom). With respect to the linguistic forms, the specificity of language functioning is described by Bühler’s term of displacement. The effect of displacement is to generate sharedness by inducing a movement the partners follow, going beyond their actual, sensitive contact. *Symbolic* displacement, expanding Bühler’s notion, is particularly interesting with regard to the dialogical self: it permits the social construction of several perspectives on self, other, and reality—positions and voices informing the self’s performances.

Keywords

Bühler, displacement, performativity, self performance, symbol

Within the dialogic paradigm presently worked out in several disciplines of the social sciences (Bertau, Gonçalves, & Raggatt, 2012; Hermans & Gieser, 2012; Linell, 2009; Valsiner, 2007; Weigand, 2009), it seems particularly important to address language as phenomenon inherently linked to human sociality and individuality, in communicative as well as in cognitive respects (Bertau, 2011b). A dialogic speaking-and-thinking approach is thus taken to be adequate in order to address the complexity of language as that socio-psychological, dynamic wholeness. This contribution proposes to explore particularly the role of language for the self, where language is understood along the lines of its performative and interactive dimensions. “Movements” come to the fore, movements induced by the language activity, by the performance itself, but also inherently belonging

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to the functioning of the verbal sign. Bühler's (1934/2011) pragmatic language psychology offers here a very fruitful pathway, because it is so precisely focused on the question of how language functions for "a system of two" (*Zweiersystem*) pertaining to a social community (Bühler, 1927). The central term "displacement" (*Versetzung*) taken up in this exploration belongs actually to Bühler's theory of language (1934/2011), even though I propose to extend the term beyond the limits Bühler drew, that is, into the symbolic field itself. Using the term of displacement in that extended way with respect to a dialogic notion of language and of the self, the contribution examines the term's potentiality for a view on language that holds its representational function, but without attaching "representation" to the work of an individual mind: precisely by embedding the term into a *pragmatic* language psychology it is possible to go beyond the sole individual and the sole mind as a cognitive functioning and into something like a "praxologic representation." This echoes Bühler's own discussion of the representational function of language, itself in close relationship to the debate of the second half of the 20th century that critically questions the idea that language represents the state of affairs, so that organization and functioning of language *are explained from* what is represented in language (Friedrich, 2009, p. 37).

In a first step, the framework for understanding the central term of language is explained. Language is principally viewed as a process, from the perspective of its "doing-ness." The notion of "spacetime of language" is introduced in order to capture the dynamic relationship between language and the self, which are themselves dynamic phenomena. In a second step, displacement is introduced, its effects and its condition are examined, with a focus on the twofold-ness of absence and presence generated by language displacement. The meaning of displacement for a self which is conceived as dialogical is the topic of the third step.

Movements in speaking

Framework

The core subject "language" is understood in accordance with the framework of cultural-historical psychology as put forth by Vygotsky and his circle (Yasnitsky, 2011), a framework that stresses the mediatedness of human activity.¹ According to this idea, human activity is principally mediated, it employs mediational means such as concrete tools and language, and these mediational means shape the activities in essential ways (Wertsch, 1993). The proximity of tool and language, induced not the least by Vygotsky himself (1931/1997), affirms an instrumental view of language—"language" seems to be interchangeable with "tool" and best understood in terms of that term: an instrument individuals can put to use in order to reach certain aims, an instrument which is principally at the disposal of these individuals. Actually, the tool metaphor for language is firmly rooted in modern European thinking, language is said to be "the most useful tool of thinking" (Wundt, Bühler), or "the tool of tools" (Hegel; Keiler, 2002, pp. 187–188). In general, cultural-historical psychology and activity theory subsequently developing in the 20th century conceptualize language following that basic notion and treat language as "mediational instrument."

In view of that largely unquestioned conceptualization it is important to observe Vygotsky's own development of the tool–language nexus. His early research and writings indeed view language from an instrumental perspective, underscoring its functioning as tool within the semiotic mediation processes taking place intermentally and intramentally. Thus, his interest lies first in mediation itself, not yet in its means, simply seen as instrument. But from the 1930s on, Vygotsky gave up the tool metaphor for language and developed an increasing interest for the means of mediation itself, and, particularly, for the “meaning volume” of the word. Vygotsky realized that the psychological tool, i.e., the word, has an inner side, the “far side of the moon,” leading him to the basic assumption of the *developing* relationship between a sign and its meaning (1934/1987, Chapters 5, 6, 7). This lead Vygotsky to confer language—precisely as dynamic movement between thought and word—a key status in the new theory he envisaged for psychology.

Starting with the cultural-historical framework, and taking up Vygotsky's lately emerging approach to language, I differentiate the “mediational means” in terms of “dialogic language.” Dialogic language is seen as informed by address and reply as the activity where mediation takes place. This is achieved by involving Vygotsky's contemporary dialogic linguistics and language philosophy as given in Jakubinskij, Vološinov, and Bakhtin (Bertau, in press-b). Vygotsky's contemporaries build not only a dialogic notion of language but also a dialogic notion of consciousness, working with concepts like “inner speech” and “inner audience” (Bakhtin, Vološinov) where “voice” appears to have a clear psychological function for the psycho-social organization and functioning of the socialized individual (e.g., Bertau, 2008). Continuing this Russian-Soviet dialogic vein and involving the framework of dialogical self theory (e.g., Hermans & Gieser, 2012), I further understand the subject as a dialogical self. The result of this double differentiation is the dynamization of entities to dialogical processes and the clear acknowledgment of *otherness*. Otherness describes the basic position of the individual as addressed and affected (“touched,” “altered”) by the other. This fundamental relatedness can be explained from a developmental point of view: at the moment of birth (even with conception) the subject enters into the world of others, which is a world constituted *in* language and constituted *through* the actual language activity of others, an incessant performance of meaning-making activities, manifested in ways of speaking and listening, of addressing and replying (Bertau, 2012a). Hence, the self comes to be a self by virtue of these other originating acts, developing as socialized individual, and that is: as self–other related individual. The resulting framework for the study of language as psycho-social phenomenon is hence a synthesis of cultural-historical and dialogic approaches to language and the self, founded on the notion of alterity (Bertau, 2011a, 2011b).

Notion of language

As stated, mediational means are conceived in terms of dialogic language and this conception is linked to a certain tradition of language notion. Indeed, understanding language as mediated activity along the lines of Soviet psychology is historically and conceptually related to Humboldt's “energetic” definition of language saying that language is not an *ergon*, i.e., a work or product, it is *energeia*—a “doing-ness,” an activity.²

Hence language is the spoken word, it is the speech that happens, and the aspect of language as a product, or a system, becomes secondary to the language as a process itself. So, on the one hand, the processes taking place between at least two individuals are privileged—privileged is the praxis of language as an always situated, culturally and historically specific praxis cooperatively conducted by mutually oriented individuals. On the other hand, the aspect of performativity is foregrounded, highlighting the dynamics of forms and formations taking place in time and through time, thus transtemporal forms existing through their moment-by-moment, specific performance. Performativity means also sensorial, bodily experience of the forms performed—by both speaker and listener: hence, the phenomenality of language matters in such an approach, its appearance in terms of rhythms, tempo, tone of voice, ways of wording, pause and turn structures, kinds of address. This is reflected on the semiotic level in the understanding of the verbal sign as “vivid materiality” (Bertau, 2011a, 2011b; Vološinov, 1929/1986). To see language as performance between socio-culturally situated individuals, means to move it definitely over to a rhetoric understanding and to highlight its effective function.

Following this line of argument, it becomes further clear that a shift concerning the locus of language takes place: from single individuals to their in-between. This shift has two remarkable consequences. The first one is to acknowledge that the actually performed language activity shows a specific quality, conferring it its own status: it does not amount to an addition of every individual’s single act, rather, it is an autonomous *gestalt* beyond additionality. De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) champion such a view for interaction in general, inviting us to

go beyond a view that defines interaction as simply the spatio-temporal coincidence of two agents that influence each other. We must move towards an understanding of how their history of coordination demarcates the interaction as an identifiable pattern with its own internal structure, and its own role to play in the process of understanding each other and the world. (p. 492)

Following this reading, it is not possible to reduce the language activity to single acts, nor can it be traced back to the individual’s respective intentions. In effect, the notion of self-contained agent usually taken for granted must be given up in favor of an “active–passive” agent, permeable to the other’s acts, and to a common history of language activities. The specificity of the in-between is conditioned by the dialogicality of the verbal acts: they are interdependent, which means that the actual formation of the acts takes up past utterances as well as possible future ones. Speaking is to weave oneself in that dynamic net of positioned voices, making up the verbal culture and experience of a speaker community.

The second consequence of the shift from the individuals to the in-between means to take seriously the experience and embodiment of the language activity previously mentioned: that is, to take seriously the phenomenality of language in its communicative *and* psychological effects—voice for instance, is to be given an important role in this respect. In short, voice is a genuine psycho-linguistic phenomenon: a dense qualitative socio-cultural texture of living materiality that is of utmost importance for human beings. In my understanding, voice plays a major role in the formation and developments of a dialogical self (Bertau, 2012b; Bertau et al., 2012), of consciousness (Bertau, 2008), and in symbol formation with regard to language acquisition (Gratier & Bertau, 2012).

The “spacetime of language”

In order to give the autonomous gestalt emerging in the language activity performed by self–other related individuals not only a status in its own right, but also an adequate conceptual form, I propose the term “spacetime of language”: it acknowledges the fact that any language performance happens and generates a specific space situated in time and informed by the flow of time. Space is not understood as a container, it is not the euclidian three-dimensional space independent from time. Rather, it is a space built up and altered by language activities, a moving and wandering of interdependently emerging forms across time, such as words and utterances, entangled with gazes, postures and positions, mimics, gestures, and whole body movements. The verbal formations within the spacetime happen according to the spatial and temporal positionings of the partners, which, in turn, are conditioned (but not determined) by the partners’ socio-cultural positions. Worth noting, positions are enacted and formed verbally *and* via the physical space to which objects belong importantly.³ So, the spacetime of language is exactly that specific in-between generated by the verbal formations of speaking-and-listening partners within this sensible space-in-time, partners touch and affect each other in their common Now by their voicings and wordings, themselves shaped by the (dynamically changing) positions and kinds of address the partners enact. Hence, the spacetime of language performed at the office of a male professor by that professor and a female student at a German university is for instance markedly different from a similar spacetime 100 years ago (1914)—it *sounds* different, and it *looks* different.

As this language spacetime is an evolving, unfolding dynamics, its forms are experienced under several aspects. First, as linguistic forms: specific words in a certain word order, coupled with specific intonations; second, the forms are experienced through their “chronotopology”: locus and direction of an utterance within physical space as well as within imagined-performed spaces according to dynamic structures of addressivity, coupled with tempo and rhythmicity (who is speaking to whom by what kind of addressive act, and from where to where, with changeable proximity); to this comes the possible entanglement of several chronotopes leading to a plurality of voices and positions forming the language spacetime (see Karsten, 2014); and, third, the forms are experienced according to the roles and positionings of the performers: self as-whom to other(s) as-whom, the positionings changing across the performance more or less markedly. Again, objects have to be included in these positioning processes forming the spacetime of language: they can be owed a voice (puppets, artifacts like computers), given a role by the partners leading to further positioning, they can also position the partners to each other from the start (a couch and a chair). So, what is observable across language spacetimes are forms in function, forms functioning for individuals and for their communicative and relational purposes.

Displacement

Bühler and an extension

How does this spacetime of language function? This autonomous *gestalt*, which is generated by the partners, emerging from their verbal activities, and which affects them in a

certain way? What exactly is the “doing-ness” of language, how does language put the spacetime into effect? Bühler’s general pragmatic approach to language is a good starting point, because it stresses the partners’ language activities *as* activity with specific psychological effects: displacement is here the notion signifying that dynamics are at work, thus very useful for our questioning.

“Mutual navigation” (*gegenseitige Steuerung*) is the term with which Bühler (1927) goes beyond Darwin and Wundt, stressing the functional and pragmatic dimensions of language, and, on the contrary to these thinkers, explicitly addressing an individual within a community: not a single speaker, but an individual as “sign-giver” to which a “sign-receiver” belongs, so that expression and reception are correlative acts. Contact and mutual regulation belong to the grounding idea of mutual navigation—they can take different concrete and more abstract forms. *Navigating* each other’s conduct (*Benahmen*) and experience (*Erleben*) in terms of a coordinated understanding, and *regulating* each other through different kinds of contacts: both notions pertain to Bühler’s (1927) understanding of language as practical “field implement” for each other’s orientation. Hence, Bühler’s (1934/2011) famous organon model of language includes two individuals and their world. The verbal sign—situated at the center of Bühler’s model—gets its semantic relations precisely from these three involved entities: it is symptom of the speaker (expressive function), signal for the receiver (appealing function), and symbol of the “things and states of affairs” (representative function). Thus, Bühler offers us a view of language which addresses two socialized individuals, mutually turned to each other, and for whom the verbal sign functions in specific ways. Language is and remains bound to this situation, it is nothing *less*.

The term “field implement” makes clear that verbal symbols are used not to reflect the world, but to *mediate* it: “the representational implement language ... is a *medial* implement in which certain intermediates play a part” (Bühler, 1934/2011, p. 171). By insisting on the quality and working of language as an implement and by the related notion of the field, Bühler highlights the mediating of language as a commonly achieved doing: in need of a field commonly, lively, and presently experienced and established by consociates (to take Schütz’s 1971 term). In this, Bühler also contravenes the mind-centered understanding of “representation,” an understanding that privileges the power of the mind to represent, subordinating language to that power: the act of representing is in this case located in the individual mind, and *not* in the language—language becomes a transparent medium without its own “representational force.” In this way, two notions of “representation” appear. First, a notion privileging the mind and its power to represent; here, language represents “without presenting” (Friedrich, 2009, p. 44), i.e., without existing in its own right as specific medium, with a clear tendency to lose its link to the world: language is transparent. Second, a notion—Bühler’s notion we try to retrace—privileging the language practice of a system of socially organized individuals; here, language represents through presentation, it has a direct connection to the world, it itself represents, now—so there is no duplication of realities (here and now, changeable—there, essential/conceptual, unchangeable; Friedrich, 2009, p. 44).⁴ With Bühler, one thus can accede to a dialogic and praxologic notion of language representation. It is a notion that remains with the language users and their language activity. In this, language appears to follow reality in a certain sense; it shows a certain “fidelity.” As Friedrich (2009)

points out, Bühler agrees with Cassirer to reject the ideology of language as reflection or image of reality, but he does this with much more prudence, stopping at a point modern theoreticians of language transgress:

No, human language does not paint, neither as the painter paints nor as the film paints, it does not even “paint” as the musicians’ musical-paper does.

Nonetheless, fidelity in some sense must still be possible in its renderings. For without fidelity there is no “representation” that would be worthy of the name. It seems to me that some important contemporary theoreticians of language (Cassirer among them) have gone too far in their well-founded opposition to the ancient and medieval views on the “image function” of language and are in danger of emptying the baby out with the bath water. (Bühler, 1934/2011, p. 215)

So, by not going too far into detaching language from what it represents, i.e., from reality, Bühler accepts and acknowledges the paradox that language is at the same time *not* an image, *but* faithful to reality (Friedrich, 2009, p. 42)—it is exactly fidelity that prevents language from being casted out from the connection of thinking to reality. And, furthermore, it is fidelity to reality that maintains language’s relation to its users, who are living human beings anchored in a specific reality as necessarily mutually related individuals. This form of faithfulness is evocative of Humboldt’s understanding of language: for Humboldt, language unifies sign (*Zeichen*) and image (*Abbild*), it consists not simply of arbitrary signs emerging from an arbitrary act—on the contrary, it is a synthesis of sensuality (*Sinnlichkeit*) and intellect (*Verstand*; see Bertau, 2011a; Liebrucks, 1965; Trabant, 1990).

The symbol used guides the partners’ understanding, and the effect of the verbal symbol is thus to displace each other’s momentary attention toward an aspect of reality that is then jointly referred to. Mediation is fundamentally a movement to be followed and accomplished by both partners—without move, no understanding, which is to be distinguished from misunderstanding, where understanding occurs, although “at the wrong place in the world” (see Hörmann’s, 1976, “falsche Weltstelle”). So, language is in Bühler a “release mechanism” (*Auslösung*, later *Appell*, appeal) leading the speakers/listeners to an oriented perception. Hence, as Friedrich (2009) concludes, for Bühler the link between world and language is neither mediated by the mind, nor by representations as mental conceptions (*Vorstellungen*), but it is pre-formed by “language as structuring dimension of the phenomenological facts” (Friedrich, 2009, p. 58). By the language mediators, an orientation within a common field is put in train. It is in that sense, on the grounds of the guiding or navigating notion, that I would state that displacement is central to Bühler’s (1934/2011) pragmatic understanding of language functioning.⁵ It highlights that in the moment of displacement, speakers/listeners see and think something in the world which would be neither seen nor thought by them *without the mediation of language* (Friedrich, 2009, p. 58), although within the limits of “a certain fidelity” to reality. Making present what is otherwise un-conceivable is the very accomplishment of language. Precisely then does language not subordinate itself to a mind that possesses the representational power, language does then not represent reality in the mind-centered understanding; rather, language, by its representation through presentation explores

reality as a meaningful reality in its own rights—meaningful to social, mutually related individuals.

The following list gives Bühler's (1934/2011) types of displacement, extended by three further types I propose (Bertau, 2011a, 2011b). Displacement can be carried out:

1. Within the *actual perceptual field* surrounding the partners (“Where is it?,” “It’s me!”), corresponding to a visual demonstration: the addressee has to follow with eyes and ears the direction indicated (to “there,” to the speaking “I”). (Bühler’s *ocular demonstration*.)
2. When extended beyond the actual surroundings, the partners enter the *space of imagination* that functions without a common *perceptual* field, navigating each other within the not-present—the function of language is to make the absent present (Bühler, 1934/2011, pp. 93–96, Chapter 6, pp. 140–143). Understanding recounted memories or invented stories thus demands a clear psychological displacement, making use nonetheless of the linguistic means *already used* in the common perceptual field (“I will soon come back to you, said the prince”). (Bühler’s *imagination oriented deixis*.)
3. A novel quality is introduced by the anaphora, the third type of displacement that departs the *perceptual* field—be it real or imagined—and navigates the addressee within the “order of language” itself: the said or the written, so to speak, rolls itself up before the inner eyes and ears of the addressee who has to “look” at the places of the actual language activity indicated by the addressing person (“As previously said”). So, the anaphora does not indicate things talked about, but words and utterances (Bühler, 1934/2011, p. 443). The anaphora is for Bühler a pivot to the qualitatively different symbolic field: instead of indicating, there is *representation*. In this field, meanings are no longer context or field-dependent, so the partners *can and must* construct notions which are no longer bound to extra-linguistic reality but are generated by language itself, hence language constructs its own context (or field). The anaphora fulfills its pivotal function by introducing *language* as a field in its own right.
4. As said, I understand symbolic representation as another type of displacement. Where the aiming point of the indicating defines in the first types the meaning in terms of fulfilling it (Bühler, 1934/2011, p. 94), it comes to a *reversion* in *symbolic displacement*: the aim of the verbal indication is no longer what defines the meaning, on the contrary, it is now the meaning, set first, that defines what is aimed: it defines, so to speak, a reality. An example would be: “I think culture is an interesting field of study” where the meaning of the words is the starting point for a specific reality. Hence, the symbol emancipates the language users from their actual and perceptual reality and they become able to construct other realities.⁶ This form of displacement needs a common, reiterated praxis leading to a *conceptual and linguistic* world as a field of reference.
5. A variation of symbolic displacement is the *metaphoric displacement*: in this case, the displacement is made perceivable—the other is explicitly requested to make an unusual symbolic move.

6. Finally, in so called *lectic displacement*⁷ it is no more the world which is presented (made present), but speakers present themselves or others as speakers. This is done in “constructed dialogues” and reported talk (Holt & Clift, 2007; Tannen, 1989).

Effect and conditions of displacement

For Bühler, displacement serves mutual navigation, by which members of a “true community” coordinate each other through a semantic means—in such a community the meaningful behavior of the members is subjected to mutual navigation (Bühler, 1927, p. 39). Insisting on mutuality, Bühler highlights what he calls the “dynamic concordance of behavior,” a veritably occurring mutual regulation on the grounds of diverse forms of contact. Following Bühler’s ideas of mutuality and contact, I propose to explain the effect of language displacement by the fact that it generates sharedness beyond the actual, sensitive contact of, for instance, a touching hand. So, by more abstract language displacement, the individuals come to share a common affective and cognitive world—more precisely: on the grounds of common social practices, they *assume* they share common meanings and concepts, common feelings and evaluations.

Clearly then, displacement does *not* automatically occur and function by language activity, rather, it can well fail when interlocutors are not able to generate and hold affective and cognitive contact. This can represent much of an effort, displacement can be “a jump,” a risky movement to somewhere unknown until now—this is for instance what innovative metaphors ask to do. Of course, displacement can also be a completely habitual movement not *felt* any more. Generally, displacement necessitates by both partners an active re-directing in cognitive and affective terms. It is an actively realized attachment, a cognitively and imaginatively constructed relation as specific drive between speaker, listener, and their reference—meaning that is the “mutual relationship” of the three elements.⁸ The movement to be accomplished is conditioned by the willingness to follow each other, i.e., an affective openness to the other’s “symbolic touch,” and by the ability to move, i.e., to change one’s perspective, to look at the world from another stance.

My intention in putting forth the notion of displacement is to stress the aspect of *movement*, which I think belongs genuinely to the function of representation, even more if looked at from a dialogic perspective of both language and the subject. In this, I use “displacement” more as heuristical term than as a kind of new master term.⁹ Foregrounding “movement” through this heuristic term enables us to acknowledge the psychic, affective, cognitive *change in stance* affecting the communicating subjects as a “praxologic movement,” that is, accomplished as a common doing, within a common field of perception, of experience, of meaning. So, what the term allows us to grasp is, first, the praxologic dimension of that change; second, it allows us to see the specific effect of that change on the subjects and their praxis introduced by symbolic displacement. Indeed, as symbolic displacement, belonging to full-fledged language, the movement reveals its full power, although necessarily based in non-symbolic precursors: it continues to appeal, to direct, and guide, but necessitating and creating now a field that itself works on meaning, creating its own (sensorial, structural, and contextual) auxiliaries in order to direct the attention, to form the appeal. This amounts to fulfill the mutual guidance that goes

beyond an instruction to *behave* in a certain way, as the signal does: the symbol “directs and guides the intentional stance or the attention” (Sinha, 2007, p. 1282). Exactly by this shift away from behavior the symbol *needs and invokes* conventionalization, structural elaboration, and intentionality. There is here a shift into something like self-referentiality of the communication system in its use by the subjects: they “turn, or apply it to itself,” as it were, and elaborate it in a specifically different way: as genuine symbolic system, surpassing the code (see Bühler, 1934/2011, I., §5).

Continuing the motif of common praxis, and according to the phenomenality of language I advocate for, I would like to stress here the materiality of the forms of contact we humans have developed: interaction and communication are not the results of an intersubjective foundation of the human mind, rather, it is through a concretely experienced and performed material-based praxis that we come to an understanding of the other, of ourselves, and of a common reality as a public realm of sense. Any kind of “sharing” and “intersubjectivity” is the *result* of praxis.

Displacement: Shared presence—absence

So, the language spacetime functions by displacement practices, and this generates a specific form of shared presence—absence. It generates first *a specific now*: being together in time and space, evolving across time in a coordinated manner. Second, being together not-there and not-now, *being together absent*, which further explains the specific now and deepens the feeling of sharedness—it *is experienced as* intersubjectivity, as “feeling of understanding” (Hörmann, 1976).

The *specific now* is: being together in a *presented* present, something absent is there for us as if put on stage and made present—visually and acoustically. Further, *being together absent* is being together on that stage we generate by our language activities, it is being together absent from our concrete, physical here-and-now. Of course, both processes are inextricably related into one process, and this quality of relation might be specific for symbolic representation. Both processes are felt as that simultaneity of here and not-here, and this experience deepens the cognitive-affective feeling/perception of togetherness—what we are used to calling “understanding.”

Of utmost importance is that the specific form of shared presence—absence is deeply informed by the means of its creation—language—not in terms of something like a tie or a channel (as in the transmission model), but in terms of a third power, a medium of own status. Language is that medium, is that power, is that Third. The “objectivity of language”—in the Humboldtian sense (Bertau, in press-a)—corresponds to this Third, it gives all speaking and listening its *public* character, making displacement a public affair, a social and socializing process. Hence, it is a *social* not-now where displacement displaces to, constructed by social, public practices. The symbol is more than conventional, it is public. A “shared” understanding is not symmetric, the minds do not (and need not) correspond to one another—the argument is to first look at practices, not at minds. A shared understanding is shared on the grounds of being social (*sensu* Bühler’s “true community”), that is: practiced commonly, through mutually recognizable forms in time.

As a result, one can say that language functions as a procedure leading the partners “astray” from their here-and-now. In leading language users astray, language displays its power to construct realities as socially shared, that is, *understandable* realities. The socializing power of language can be seen as residing in the movement the selves must perform and follow, that is co-constructed in a coordinated way, again and again: a movement leading them into the public, the shared, the social, indeed. In this reading, the sociality of selves is *not* an effect of the sociality of linguistic symbols (their “conventionality”), but of their dialogical movements leading them together into the public as Third.

Symbolic displacement and the dialogical self

Dialogical dynamizing of Bühler’s triad

As seen, Bühler (1934/2011) gives three basic displacing procedures, therewith distinguishing the indexing from the naming mode of language, the indexing mode belonging to the deictic field, the naming mode belonging to the symbolic field. Hence, the ocular demonstration and the imagination-oriented deixis are truly situated in the deictic field, whereas the anaphora functions as a pivot to the symbolic field and to the mode of naming, it is a passage to the symbolic field where “things and states of affairs” are not indicated, not showed, but named (see, e.g., Bühler, 1934/2011, II, 8).

Taking the perspective of a *dialogical dynamizing* of the triad self—other—things and states of affairs, i.e., of the three dimensions of the organon model, I propose to see displacement at work also in the symbolic field, and it occurs also in naming. Doing this, I do not negate the crucial change in quality introduced by the symbolic procedure, but I want to preserve the aspect of presenting characterizing Bühler’s deictics. To my mind, “things and states of affairs” are also presented in certain ways in the language activity, they are positioned by the language activity of self and other and they, in turn, position them: this is what I understand by the dialogical dynamizing of the triad. So to speak, I haul the “things and states of affairs” into dialogicality, and that is, into the dynamics of voices and positions: this “dialogic reality,” as it were, is made present by language, represented though presentation—within the limits of the fidelity of language to reality, in close touch with it.

In presenting each other aspects and modes of their reality the partners present and position themselves to each other and to themselves; they present their world and its meanings colored by affects related to a certain stance toward the reality in question, to the listening other, and to themselves in this specific speaking–listening situation. It is in that presentation that their world becomes *their* world: a commonly inhabited place in space and time, saturated with meanings which are understandable and public. So, what is presented are *these* selves who inhabit *that* world, who are able to see it *like that*: through *these* public generalizations, full of the value accents and tones of their community. To which they take a stance any time they speak and listen. It is to conclude then, that each time the dialogical selves speak, they transpose each other and themselves into that common–personal world, they move and look, they position each other plus themselves, and they are positioned: in this way, they perform and experience their selves.

Ravishment

Displacement demands an actively realized attachment, a cognitively and imaginatively constructed and experienced relation resulting in a specific drive between speaker, listener, and their reference. Taking account of that cognitive and affective drive or movement, as well as of the powerful Third and therewith acknowledging the effective, rhetoric function of language, I would like to propose the notion of *ravishment* as mode of displacement. Ravishment radicalizes the notion of displacement by opening it to the powerful, reality-generating effects of language performance.¹⁰ Ravishment brings to clear light how symbolic language functions as a procedure leading the partners astray from their here-and-now, from their respective view on reality and into a reality of own rights. Language has thus the power to construct and present unknown realities, and therewith the power to relate each other into these realities—*this* is ravishment. In a psychoanalytical perspective we can speak of the desire to share this reality astray, to be “there” with the “significant other” (the one to which an individual is affectively related to, the psychoanalytical object). Regarding language acquisition, we can speak of the desire for language in order to be there astray with the other. In this context, Merleau-Ponty speaks of the “whirlwind” of language, capturing the infant (and ourselves, as we must add). So, language acquisition can be described as being “captured by *le langage*, through the other’s *parole*” (de Lemos, 2000, p. 176). The power of the drive, of the movement induced by language lies in experiencing its potency to generate a specific reality, *and* to participate in that presentation—or: in the *desire to join in that reality*.

Conclusion

It is particularly symbolic displacement that permits the dialogical self the social construction of several perspectives on own and other’s self, and on a reality. These perspectives correspond to positions and voices informing the self’s performances. Symbolic displacement permits to see and hear a world that could not be seen and heard otherwise—a world coming into existence as common, present by the language activity. That activity generates a socio-cultural reality *as a world made of* positions and voices: of selves. Un-perceivable and un-conceivable without language.

Positions and voices are hence cognitive-affective perspectives articulated in language, articulable through language—existing in language, nothing but the addressed word (the told story, the given order, the asked question, the begged answer, the refused reply). Although they originate in real interaction between actual selves, they can be transmitted and passed over precisely by virtue of their articulatedness in language—as verbal forms in function. They can be generalized and abstracted to different degrees, according to different psycho-social needs, which are themselves bound to specific cultural, historical, and social life forms. By their verbal articulation positions and voices fulfill their trans-temporal and trans-individual functions and render possible the psycho-social complexity characterizing socialized individuals. To this complexity belongs a changeable and highly flexible psychological multiplicity—as approximated by the model of the dialogical self—enabling the individuals to be different by staying unique, to develop at all. Displacement is seen as crucial to dialogical complexity as manifested

in positions and voices, because of its power to de-locate, to displace from the actual here-and-now, and that means for the individual self to join in her community of selves, to become a public, an understandable self.

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Notes

1. I use the label “cultural-historical” as basically equivalent to “socio-cultural,” or “socio-historical”—a correct, but even longer, term would involve all three dimensions of human activity, which is always socially, culturally, and historically situated (see also Wertsch’s discussion, 1993, pp. 15–16). The deliberate choice of the term “cultural-historical” recognizes the important contribution to psychology by Vygotsky and his circle, *and* it recognizes the history of the political threatening of the ideas developed and of the investigations conducted within that circle. Indeed, as Keiler (2012) precisely shows, the term “cultural-historical” for Vygotsky’s and his colleague’s work served as a devaluating label in the 1930s, moreover, it was not a term used by Vygotsky and colleagues. Conscious of that history in the 1930s, as well as acknowledging the fact that the term itself made history in the 20th century, I wish to affirm it in a positive way, and to develop its conceptual volume (see, e.g., Bertau, 2011b).
2. The usual translation of Humboldt’s (1830–35/1907, 1999) *energeia* in English is “being-at-work,” but I prefer “doing-ness,” a term used by Seifrid (2005). Humboldt’s German term for *energeia* is *Tätigkeit* (in contrast to *ergon*: *Werk*, work), meaning the process as well as the result of an activity. Activity theory corresponds to *Tätigkeitstheorie*.
3. To the role of objects in the perspective of related individuals see Sinha and Rodriguez (2008), Bertau (2007), Zittoun (2006). That social positioning processes have their material basis in movements within physical, social, and institutional spaces is emphasized by Gillespie and Martin (2014). I think the *entanglement* of spatio-temporal, social, *and* verbal positioning processes is to be addressed as a whole.
4. Note that Bühler’s notion of representation is also formulated against Cassirer’s notion as developed in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (e.g., 1934/2011, p. 215). Viewed from the point of view of contemporary sciences, Cassirer’s prioritizing of the mind’s power to represent links in a way back to the representational theory of thinking in contemporary cognitive and experimental psychology. This leaves out the question of *how* language represents, i.e., how—in Bühler’s term—language is capable to represent in its own way almost everything we are thinking of, the core question of a language theory (1927, p. 59).
5. Following the subject index of Bühler’s language theory (in the original German version as given in 1934/1982), there are only three occurrences of the term displacement (*Versetzung*); the term is used with respect to the deictic field. Nevertheless, I think it is defensible to give the term the central status I advance. First, because of the contexts of ideas forming Bühler’s notion of language (the metaphor of the field and the field implement, the forms of contact displayed by the system of two, the notion of navigating or guiding); second, insofar Bühler aims at working at the specificity of the symbolic field leading beyond the deictic field, he has

- to reduce the role of displacement. I think that extending displacement into the symbolic field can even make the work of the linguistic symbol more clear: it does indeed not show, it does not lead to a mental image, but it *represents*, it *presents* reality—and this already happens in the deictic field: displacement is then always a complex semiotic accomplishment.
6. This reversion is derived from the reversion taking place in symbolic play between meaning and activity; see Vygotsky (1933/1967).
 7. The term “lectic” is derived from Greek *lexis*, meaning in rhetorical contexts the way of speaking.
 8. See Bühler’s organon model, its dialogic understanding in Vološinov (1926/1983), and the discussion in Karsten (2012, p. 105).
 9. Elsewhere, I have proposed an application of the term to the findings of an empirical study addressing symbol-formation in mother-infant exchanges (Gratier & Bertau, 2012). A core issue of the topic of displacement as I treat it is how to keep discontinuity within continuity allowing for innovative moves, or qualitative new steps within development in order to account for the difference between a signal-like and a true symbolic communication. At the same time, it is also important to keep continuity between the different moves happening in development, underscoring, (a) the *pragmatic fact* that language emerges not in a vacuum but from a dialogic history with shared interactional practices of various forms—as put forth by the interactional approach for some decades now (e.g., Bruner, 1975, 1983) and highlighting (b) the *cognitive fact* that symbolic language “is structurally and functionally continuous with, motivated by, and emergent from nonlinguistic cognitive processes” (Sinha, 2007, p. 1287). Sinha (2012) discusses the question of continuity-discontinuity commenting on Gratier and Bertau (2012) and Lyra (2012), who treats continuity-discontinuity in terms of dynamic systems theory.
 10. The notion of ravishment is built according to the ancient Sophist’s notion of *apate*, see Buchheim (1989). In Bertau (2011a) I use the notion in the context of the mutual navigating and guiding in order to highlight the never harmless use of language, its powerful, leading, and misleading effects. Hence, ravishment is both positive and negative, it is in any case unavoidable, although happening to different degrees.

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