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INTRODUCING THE FIRST TOPIC SLOT IN PLAUTINE DIALOGUES

The everyday dialogue is not a uniform monolithic activity but it seems to be regularly structured. There are conventional signals to delimitate verbal interaction: the salutation ritual marks the beginning of the conversation, whereas the exchange of farewell formulae indicates that the (verbal) contact between the interlocutors has come to an end. Thus one can distinguish between the initial and the final phase of the dialogue. According to J. Laver, these margins of the interaction is where (most of) the phatic communication takes place.[1] By greeting the speaker is establishing the contact and declaring amicable relations with the addressee. The closing ritual, also marked with tokens of politic behavior or politeness,[2] serves as a proof that this non-hostile relationship has not changed during the conversation and, moreover, may be continued in future interactions.

While those phases are designed to focus on the interpersonal background of the dialogue, the medial part is where the conversational goals are being

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[1] LAVER 1981, 292. Cf. also the first use of the term ‘phatic’ by B. Malinowki (1923, 296–336), when it is also strictly related to the organizational stages of the dialogue. The more recent studies (e.g. ŽEGARAC, CLARK 1999, 321–346), on the other hand, stress that the phaticity may be a feature of any utterance at any point of the discourse.

[2] According to R.J. Watts (2003, 21) politic behaviour is “that behaviour, linguistic and nonlinguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction.” Therefore, it is kind of a non salient ritualistic and formulaic activity. There are, nevertheless, instances of salutation and parting that go beyond what is perceived as conventional and necessary, which, thus, are opened for either polite or impolite interpretation, as defined by P. Brown, S.C. Levinson (1987 [an extended version of an article from 1978]). Hence our use of the notions of the positive and negative politeness, the face and the face needs. For the adaptation of this theoretical framework in Latin linguistics see, recently, L. Unceta Gómez (in press).

expressed, negotiated and (hopefully) fulfilled. This global structure of the verbal interaction is arguably perceivable for the interlocutors themselves who tend to delimitate every phase with some linguistic routines.[3] Let us indicate such (meta)communicative formulae in a typical Plautine comedy dialogue. Interestingly enough, even in the on-stage, artistically elaborated conversations most of the transitions from one phase to another tend to be signalized. In the present paper our intention is to analyze the linguistic means—in various stages of pragmaticalization—which introduce the medial section of conversation as represented in the text of the Sarisinate.

A prototypical organization of the comedy dialogue is presented in the Table 1 (below). Accordingly, the initial phase consists of an opening sequence (with summons, identification, salutation etc.) and a device that closes up this (phatic) stage and introduces the goal-oriented exchanges (i.e. the medial phase).[4] In a similar way, when "the business is done" and one of the speakers decides to end the conversation, s/he signals his/her intention of closing by expressing the need for transition. The actual closing, however, needs the approval of the other party, if the dialogue should be considered 'harmonious' and 'politic.'[5] The pre-closing sequence, on the other hand, enables the parties to negotiate yet another topic to be discussed—hence the frequent use of the formula *numquid (aliud me) vis?* If this opportunity is not uptaken, the interlocutors engage in the phatic part of the final phase (parting ritual). This is the linguistic device of the so-called delayed exits in Plautus which often are comically (re)elaborated.[6]

[3] Cf. the definition of 'conversational routine' given by F. Coulmas (1981, 2–3): "highly conventionalized prepatterned expressions whose occurrence is tied to more or less standardized communication situations."

[4] Cf. SCHEGLOFF 1968, 1075–1095. The conversation opening is discussed also by S.C. Levinson (1983, 309–316). The methodology of conversational analysis got often adapted for the study of (modern) dramatic dialogue—on the opening sequence cf. HERMAN 1995, 159–163.

[5] SCHEGLOFF, SACKS 1973, 289–327.

[6] Cf. J.N. Hough (1945, 282–302) for the theatrical function of the delayed exits in Plautus. More recently S. Roesch (2002, 317–332) has studied other linguistic devices (delexicalized orders, requests, questions, etc.) that appear in the pre-closing sequence.

PHASES		LINGUISTIC ROUTINES
initial	opening	*heus / Theopropides / salve / ut vales?* summons / identification / greeting / small talk
	closing up opening	*sed dic mihi* transition device
medial		
final	opening up closing	*numquid vis?* transition device
	closing	*vale/ bene ambulato* farewell formula

Table 1. Global organization of the Plautine dialogue with examples of the corresponding linguistic routines.

The problem we intend to address in this paper concerns the overt linguistic means of the transitioning from the initial to the medial (goal-oriented, committed, non-phatic, etc.) phase of conversation. Firstly, however, we should elaborate on the dialogue opening itself and its sequential structure.

1. OPENING SEQUENCE AND PRELIMINARY TOPIC IN PLAUTINE DIALOGUE

The conversation opening in the Roman comedy takes place when a new character either enters the stage or is eventually noticed by the other party. In the Plautine plays the salutation scenes show a considerable variation of linguistic tokens and their distribution in the dialogic exchanges, which was first tentatively studied by M.E. Hoffmann.[7] P. Letessier, in turn, gives some valuable insights on how this apparently ritualistic and meaningless conversational behavior acquires important dramaturgical functions.[8] As we have already pointed out, from the communicative, naturalistic, point of view the opening sequence serves to establish a direct contact with the addressee (e.g. by attention-getters) and to invite him to a face-to-face verbal interaction. The following part of the opening consists of identifying *viva voce* the participants (e.g. by forms of address) and reinforcing the interpersonal relations by the greeting exchange.[9]

[7] HOFFMANN 1983, 217–226. The scholar, however, does not distinguish the transition point from opening section to the medial phase. This pragmatic function was perspicuously identified by R. Müller (1997, 24–25), who uses the same sequential structure for the dialogue opening in Terence.

[8] LETESSIER 2000, 151–163.

[9] Cf. HOFFMANN 1983, 218–219.

At this point the opening phase of the dialogue might as well be finished. The matters of politeness, however, normally impose that the initiator of the contact postpones the moment of disclosing his real motivation for engaging in dialogue (e.g. reproach, request, searching for information). Thus after the salutation a phatic communication takes place, i.e. a preliminary topic (small talk) that normally concerns the state of health of the interlocutor or some casual matters of the everyday life.[10] As the dialogue continues and makes a transition to the medial phase, it is quite evident that those first uncommitted exchanges were hardly related to the 'real' topics and goals of the verbal interaction. It seems crucial, therefore, that we distinguish between the conventional preliminary topic (PT) and the first topic slot (FTS), which ideally contains also the reason-for-the-talk.[11] As for the Plautine comedy dialogues, the small talk segment can take form either of a single exchange (1) or extend into a whole sequence of a friendly chit-chat (2).[12]

(1)	CYA. [...] iubeo vos salvere. PHRO. Noster Cyame, quid agis?	GREETING EXCHANGE (+ IDENTIFICATION)
	ut vales? / CYA. Valeo, /	PRELIMINARY TOPIC (SMALL TALK)
	et venio ad minus valentem, **et** melius qui valeat fero. erus meus, ocellus tuos, ad te ferre me haec iussit tibi / dona quae vides illos ferre, et has quinque argenti minas. / (*Truc.* 577–580)[13]	FIRST TOPIC

The more space the phatic communication takes in the initial phase, the more probable it seems to be the need of a separate conversational device to signal the transition to the goal-oriented speech. Whereas the PT may be

[10] There is a famous rule for small talk communication which suggests that 'everyone has to lie' (i.e. utter uncommitted and insincere sentences) in order to engage in a socially oriented and casual exchange (cf. SACKS 1975, 57–79).

[11] Cf. SCHEGLOFF 1986, 116–117.

[12] The frequency and the function of small talk in the Roman comedy seems to be much undervalued by M.E. Hoffmann (1983, 226): "Preliminary remarks like 'Isn't the weather fine?' etc. are seldom used in the comedies of Plautus. The intrigue is so complicated that no time should be lost by the actors saying things irrelevant to the plot." Our study suggests, on the contrary, that there is a range of stock themes mentioned during the small talk exchanges, which often complement the depiction of the speaking (stock) character, or which are loosely related to the plot. Moreover, different sequential structure of the preliminary topic may serve as a dramaturgical device either to slow down or accelerate the action. The dialogue openings cited in (1) and (2) above are good examples of those phenomena.

[13] The text of all the Plautine comedies cited in this paper follows the edition of W. De Melo 2011–2013.

introduced simply with a question formula (*ut vales?, valen? quid agit X?* etc.), the FTS requires a range of specialized communicative maneuvers.

(2)	CAL. O amice, salve, atque aequalis. **ut vales**, / Megaronides? MEG. Et tu edepol salve, Callicles.	GREETING EXCHANGE (+ IDENTIFICATION)
	CAL. **Valen? valuistin?** MEG. Valeo, et valui rectius. / CAL. **Quid agit tua uxor? ut valet?** MEG. Plus quam ego volo. / [...] MEG. Eho tu, **tua uxor quid agit?** CAL. Immortalis est, / vivit victuraque est. [...]	PRELIMINARY TOPIC(S) (SMALL TALK)
	sed hoc animum advorte atque aufer ridicularia; / nam ego dedita opera huc ad te advenio. CAL Quid venis? /	TRANSITION DEVICE
	MEG. Malis te ut verbis obiurgem. (*Trin.* 48–68)	FIRST TOPIC

In (1) the transition was rather contextual: from the speaker's state-of--health to the sickness of the addressee which is, in turn, related to the reason-for-the-talk. The only (textual) device signalizing an intentional act of searching for continuity would be the connective *et* used by Cyamus to "get to the point" of his visit. In case of the old men in (2), the much more extended small talk requires a multi-turn system of transition, which will be described in the main part of this work.

In terms of the politeness theory, by "getting to the point" too soon the interlocutor risks a possible damage to his face. On the other hand, the social bonds of union created or strengthened during the phatic section are a perfect background for the following attempts to accomplish one's conversational tasks. Hence the importance of proper sequencing of the opening moves of the dialogue. In (3a) the old man Nicobulus, driven by concern over his son, does not reciprocate the greeting move and passes straight to the first (urgent) topic. His interlocutor, however, forces him to complete the salutation ritual (*quin tu primum salutem reddis quam dedi*?)—only then is he willing to answer Nicobulus' question.[14]

The banker Misargyrides, on the other hand, seems to be familiarized with the importance of a greeting exchange, even if his response to the slave's ceremonious *salvere iubeo te, Misargyrides, bene!* (3b) seems rather blunt and brief. Further on, his conversational *faux pas* consists on placing

[14] Cf. POCCETTI 2010, 101.

the FTS (*quid de argento est?*) much too abruptly and too early in the opening sequence. As it was to expect, Tranio, his interlocutor, protests *viva voce* by complaining that he was 'hit' by the non-phatic utterance without a warning. The slave uses even a metaphor of a javelin, cast on him just after the greeting (*continuo adveniens pilum iniecisti mihi*).[15] In the end, the transition can only be made, after the victim of this act of communicative aggression has given his explicit permission for the FTS (*quin quid vis cedo*).

(3a) CHRY. […] servos salutat Nicobulum Chrysalus. /
NIC. **Pro di immortales, Chrysale, ubi mist filius?**
CHRY. Quin tu primum salutem reddis quam dedi? /
NIC. Salve. **sed ubinam est Mnesilochus?**
CHRY. Vivit, valet. (*Bacch.* 243–246)

(3b) TRA. [...] salvere iubeo te, Misargyrides, bene. /
MIS. Salve et tu. **quid de argento est?**
TRA. Abi sis, belua. / continuo adveniens pilum iniecisti mihi. [...]
MIS. Quin tu istas mittis tricas?
TRA. Quin quid vis cedo.
MIS. **Ubi Philolaches est?** (*Most*. 568–73)

Both examples hopefully show—on a metapragmatic level—the importance of the FTS mechanisms as a distinguishable pragmatic functions inside the global structure of the dialogue. The case of Nicobulus may shed some light on the adherence to the conversational rituals in the Plautine (on-stage) social reality. Most importantly for this paper, the Tranio's comment on his interlocutor's behavior suggests that in a politic verbal interaction the FTS should be placed in a proper (linguistic) way and in the right (sequential) position. The next section will concern different variants of this conversational maneuver.

2. DEVICES OF THE FTS INSERTION[16]

The impulse for introducing the FTS may come either from the contact initiator (see sections 2.1–3) or the speaker s/he summons in order to engage in dialogue (see section 2.4). After analyzing the Plautine corpus, the most

[15] Behind the righteous indignation of Tranio, obviously, there is a hidden strategy to protract the main topic of the conversation: the unpaid debt. Even after the banker is allowed to express his intention to recollect the money, the slave still manages to send him home empty-handed (*Most.* 579–654).

[16] The following section is a revised, condensed and translated into English version of Berger (2016, 173-84).

desirable manner to make a transition to the goal-oriented section seems to be a signaling system, which consists of announcing the change, the addressee's approval and the actual placing of the FTS. Moreover, on some occasions the comedy characters close *expressis verbis* the small talk sequence (PT),[17] but more often this move is already implied by the first signal of transition. Thus we can distinguish up to four separate conversational moves employed in the most complex model of passing to the medial phase:

(4) **#1 announcement:** MEG. [...] sed hoc animum advorte
#2 closing PT: atque aufer ridicularia; / nam ego dedita opera huc ad te advenio.
#3 approval: CAL. Quid venis? /
#4 FTS: MEG. Malis te ut verbis multis multum obiurigem (*Trin.* 66–8)

This rather complicated maneuver (4—see 2 above) allows to prevent the situation when one of the interlocutors does not 'feel' ready to abandon the phatic (relation-oriented, conventional and predictable) stage of the opening. If we treat the FTS placing devices as a free combination of those conversational moves, we can indicate the following sequential models to be found in the Plautine corpus:

i. (closing PT)—announcement—approval—**FTS**
ii. (closing PT)—announcement—**FTS**
iii. **FTS**

In some cases the announcement alone (ii) suffices to 'prepare' the addressee for the change from the opening part of the conversation to the goal-oriented speech. Although no actual negotiation takes place like in (i), the speaker is still signalizing—step by step—his communicative action. By expressing his intention to make a transition the initiator is—at least potentially—inviting the addressee to object, even if the announcing speaker does not provide a pause before his following move. Finally, the most provisional and direct form of the FTS placement is to omit any signaling devices whatsoever (iii). Let us indicate different variants of those three models with a possible interaction-type-specific motivation for each of them.

[17] Cf. *Curc.* 245: CAP. ***Aufer istaec****, quaeso, atque hoc responde quod rogo*; *Trin.* 1073–4: CHAR. *Scio et credo tibi. /* ***sed omitte alia.*** *hoc mihi responde.*

2.1. MULTI-TURN SYSTEM

The full sequence of moves which includes the negotiations with the other party (5) is most typical of symmetrical relations in a casual context: among neighbors (5b, 5e = 4 above) or fellow servants (5c). The signaling of the transition in these cases fulfills also a strategic function of preparing the interpersonal ground before face threatening acts like reproaching an old friend (5e), asking for a loan (5c) or interrogating a neighbor about the financial abuses of one's own slave (5b). The approval of the FTS, in a way, is already the first step to impose on the addressee some kind of collaboration in achieving the speaker's goal. Since the interlocutor agrees to proceed, it supposes more cost for his face, if he eventually decides not to uptake the following move. Thus the signals of placing the FTS become pre-sequences, as described by S.C. Levinson:[18] a type of a pre-reproach (5e), pre-request (5c) and pre-interrogation (5b).

(5a) **announcement:** LYCO. Quid hoc quod ad te venio?
approval:: CAP. Dicas quid velis. /
FTS: LYCO. Argentum accipias, cum illo mittas virginem (*Curc*. 456–7)

(5b) **announcement:** THEO. [...]. nisi quid magis / es occupatus, operam mihi da.
approval:: SIMO. Maxume /
FTS: THEO. Minas quadraginta accepisti, quod sciam, / a Philolachete? (*Most*. 1008–11)

(5c) **announcement:** TOX. Sed hoc me unum excruciat.
approval:: SAG. Quidnam id est? /
FTS: TOX. Haec dies summa hodie est, mea amica sitne libera / an sempiternam servitutem serviat (*Persa* 33–34a)

(5d) **announcement:** AMP. [...] nunc quam ob rem huc sum missa, amabo, vel tu mi aias vel neges. /
approval:: SCEP. Quid nunc vis?
FTS: AMP. Sapienti ornatus quid velim indicium facit (*Rud*. 427–8)

(5e) **announcement:** MEG. [...] sed hoc animum advorte atque aufer ridicularia; / nam ego dedita opera huc ad te advenio.
approval:: CAL. Quid venis? /
FTS: MEG. Malis te ut verbis multis multum obiurigem (*Trin*. 66–8)

The strategic use of the announcement turn appears also in a more formal type of interaction (5a), when the reason-for-the-talk is a financial transac-

[18] Cf. LEVINSON 1983, 345–356.

tion.[19] The extract (5d), in turn, must be placed somewhere in between an informal situation and a business encounter: a young prostitute is asking an unacquainted (and abusive) servant for water to the temple. Given that the PT in this case is full of sexual innuendos, one acknowledges how important for the verbally abused courtesan is a quick and successful placing of the FTS.

Finally, it is worth stressing that the negotiative character of this model sometimes is emphasized by negative politeness tokens like the Theopropides' *nisi quid magis es occupatus* (5b). This type of expressions overtly indicates the addressee's freedom of action: at this point of the interaction—at least theoretically—s/he still can retreat without major damage to the face. This opportunity, for instance, was seized (rather unexpectedly) by the old miser Euclio, when his neighbor Megadorus was trying to announce the first topic: proposing to marry Euclio's daughter.

(6) **announcement:** MEG**.** Da mi operam parumper. paucis, Euclio, est quod te volo / de communi re appellare mea et tua. [...]
rejection: *Euclio is leaving the stage.*
MEG. Quo abis?
EUC. Iam revotar ad te: nam est quod intervisam domum (*Aul.* 199–203)

Unfortunately the avaricious and mistrustful man suspects that the "common good" (*res communis*) his interlocutor intends to discuss must concern the treasure which Euclio is hiding in his household. Therefore, in the position of the much expected approval move, the old man aborts the conversation and runs into the house in order to check, if the money is still in the safe place. In this case the announcement, which was already hinting to the reason-for-the-talk (see also 5c, 5d above), startled the addressee instead of preparing the ground for the FTS.

One should not overlook that analyzing Plautine corpus we are dealing with a literary creation stylized for a colloquial and—in many occasions—farcical dialogue. Apart from the examples (5–6) we find also ludic elaborations of the model we discuss.[20] The comical exaggeration, in a way, func-

[19] Pre-sequences and tokens of phaticity are used, nowadays, as an efficient strategy in sales and service talk – cf. CHEEPEN 2000, 288–311.

[20] Cf. HOFFMANN 1983, 225: "[...] even the smallest parts of the conversation openings are distorted, extended, maximalized, in order to add comic force to the play." The scholar does not mention in this context the transition formulae we discuss. On the other hand, she suggest that not all the elements of the opening are prone to be comically modified (e.g. answer to the summons). Given the scale of the phenomenon, present even in the FTS placement, we propose the Hoffman's statement be reevaluated.

tions as a proof for the naturalistic character of the 'serious' variants of the dialogue openings: the apparent abuse of the communicative conventions gains meaning only if the conventions themselves were commonly recognizable. In (7), for instance, the slave Pseudolus tries to introduce the FTS, after he engaged in a conversation with a pimp. The negotiative multi-turn model is, however, interrupted by Ballio, who ignores the pragmatic meaning of the announcement (*sed scin quid nos volumus?* = 'I want to introduce the reason-for-the-talk') and interprets it as an actual question.

(7) **announcement #1**: PSEU. [...] sed scin quid nos volumus?
BAL. Pol ego propemodum: ut male sit mihi /
PSEU. Et id et hoc quod te revocamus.
announcement #2: Quaeso animum advorte
approval: BAL. Audio. / atque in pauca, ut occupatus nunc sum , confer quid velis. /
FTS: PSEU. Hunc pudet, quod tibi promisit quaeque id promisit die. (*Pseud.* 276–9)

The Plautine *leno* is perfectly aware of the motives that lead a comedy slave to talk to him.[21] Pseudolus will not deny that he wants to give the pimp no good but, at the same time, he assures his interlocutor that he comes with another matter to discuss. Ballio, intrigued by the clever servant, gives permission for the FTS placement, whereas the result of the following dialogue—just like the audience might have suspected—will, indeed, bring misfortune to the pimp. Thus, by a slight change in the multi-turn signaling system Plautus—on a metatheatrical level—seems to be playing with the predictability not only of the comedy plot but also of the communication praxis.

2.2. SINGLE-TURN MODEL

The single-turn model does not contain an overt negotiation between the interlocutors about the insertion of the FTS. Hence this variant is much more frequent in asymmetric interactions, where the effectiveness of the transition is more important for the initiator than the matters of politeness and interpersonal relations. This model, on the other hand, still employs the announce-

[21] Also the audience knows perfectly that the only motivation for a comedy slave to engage in a conversation with a *leno* is to deceive him. The self-awareness of the stock characters (and their role in the plot) is a crucial factor for the metatheatrical level of *Pseud.* Accordingly, T.J. Moore (1996, 94–95) rightly points out that every characters of this play "fullfills and then exceeds all the possible expectations" of the public familiarized with the conventions of the *fabula palliata.*

ment move which—on the lexical level—mostly alludes to the speech activity itself (8) or the cognitive processes (9) that accompany it.

(8a) LYS. [...] **quid ais, vir minimi preti?** / Quid tibi mandavi? quid tecum oravi? (*Cas*. 594–5)

(8b) CAP. **Aufer istaec, quaeso, atque hoc responde quod rogo.** / potin coniecturam facere, si narrem tibi / hac nocte quod ego somniavi dormiens? (*Curc*. 245–7)

(8c) CHAR**.** Prius quam recipias anhelitum, / **uno verbo eloquere**: ubi ego sum? hicine an apud mortuos? (*Merc*. 601–2)

(8d) PAL. Salva sis. **sed dic mihi,** ecquid hic te / oneravit praeceptis? (*Mil*. 902–3)

(8e) SOPH. **Hoc mi expedi**, / quo agis? (*Persa* 215–6)

(8f) CHAR. Scio et credo tibi. / sed omitte alia. **hoc mihi responde:** liberi quid agunt mei, / quos reliqui hic filium atque filiam? (*Trin*. 1073–5)

Interestingly enough both types of those linguistic routines stress the qualitative difference between the opening phase and the goal-oriented stage of conversation. The medial phase is announced by an explicit reference to informative, 'real' talking (e.g. *dic mihi*) which—by contrast with the phatic communication—requires commitment and full attention (e.g. *animum advorte*).[22]

(9a) TOX. **Quaeso animum advorte hoc**. iam heri narravi tibi / tecumque oravi, ut nummos sescentos mihi / dares utendos mutuos (*Persa* 116–8)

(9b) ANT. **Vostrum animum adhiberi volo**; / nam ego ad vos nunc imperitus rerum et morum mulierum,/ discipulus venio ad magistras (*Stich*. 103–5)

This rather hasty one-turn device is used by a desperate youth waiting for important news from his slave (8c) or by a father asking his servant for his children after he returns from abroad (8f). As for the old man in (9b), he tries to call the attention of his daughters in order to share his plans for a new marriage. Apart from that, *servus callidus* with a short announcement just after the salutation proceeds to inquire a courtesan, if she is familiar with his clever intrigue (8d) or wants to explain the plan to a parasite (9a). A similar conversational impatience accompanies a young maid curious about the errands of other servant (8e) or is represented by an ill pimp asking a slave, if he knows how to interpret the healing dreams from the Asclepius'

[22] Cf. *Merc.* 302, *Pseud.* 277, 481, *Trin.* 66. The formula *hoc animum advorte* in other phases of the conversation serves to call the interlocutor's attention (as a pre-sequence) before an order (*Curc.* 270) or becomes a device of changing the topic after a digression (*Capt.* 329).

temple. Finally the formula *quid ais?* gets the attention of the addressee just before a verbal abuse in (8a),[23] when an angry old man reproaches his friend for carelessly complicating his plans.

Announcing the FTS, nonetheless, does not need to take such an elaborated form. Much more frequent are cases when the transition is signalized only by a simple lexical unit, namely discourse particles. There are numerous examples of the adversative *sed* used as a universal mechanism of contrast and change of topic.[24] Quite naturally, therefore, this particle is found in the dialogue opening (10) marking the boundary between the phatic and non-phatic phase of the verbal interaction.

(10) MERC. [...] **sed** si domi est, Demaenetum volebam. (*Asin*. 452)

LEO. [...] ere, salve. **sed** num fumus est haec mulier quam amplexare? (*Asin*. 619)

CHRY. [...] **sed** tu quid factitasti mandatis super? (*Bacch*. 196)

NIC. Salve. **sed** ubinam est Mnesilochus? (*Bacch*. 246)

PHAE. [...] **sed** quod te misi, nihilo sum certior. (*Curc*. 327)

CUR. [...]**sed** hunc, quem quaero, commonstrare si potes... (*Curc*. 404)

THER. [...] **sed** quid agit meum mercimonium apud te? (*Curc*. 564)

CALI. Utrumque, salve. **sed** quid actum est? (*Pseud*. 710)

GRI. [...] **sed** quid tibi est? (*Rud*. 1307)

PTO. Salvete, / puellae. **sed** unde vos / ire cum uvida veste dicam, obsecro, / tam maestiter vestitas? (*Rud*. 263–5a)

AMP. [...] **sed** Plesidippus tuos erus ubi, amabo, est? (*Rud*. 339)

CHAR. [...]**sed** quis iste est tuos ornatus? (*Trin*. 1099)

DIN. [...] **sed** quid ego facinus audivi adveniens tuom, / quod tu hic me absente novi negoti gesseris? (*Truc*. 382–3)

STRAT. [...] **sed** peperitne, opsecro, Phronesium? (*Truc*. 504)

Accordingly, this variant is even more direct a form of announcing the FTS. On the other hand, the mere presence of *sed* still proves that the participants of the conversation perceive some discontinuity of the dialogic

[23] The formula *quid ais?* has pragmaticalized and functions in the comedy discourse as an attention-getter. The recent study by P. Barrios-Lech (2014, 480–486) suggests that it pertains to the male register, what makes it similar to the appellative interjection *heus* (cf. note 25 below).

[24] Cf. C. Kroon (1995, 69–71) for discussion on different functions of the adversative *sed*.

chain. From this point of view, the adversative particle not only precedes the transition move but also provides textual cohesion of the conversation. Interestingly enough, *sed* may be used either after completion of the PT or after the exchange of greeting (e.g. *Bacch*. 246: NIC. *Salve. sed ubinam est Mnesilochus?*).

If it is not preceded by tokens of phaticity, however, the announcing of the FTS may still be interpreted as rude. In (11) the slave Simia (in disguise) summons the pimp Ballio with an attention-getter (*heus*)[25] and an ironic identification (*tu qui…*). This segment is designed by the initiator as a complete opening sequence—the next move is already trying to introduce the FTS (*responde quod rogo*). We may assume that the transition would have been carried out in a single-turn model, if the pimp had not interrupted the sequence trying to negotiate some tokens of phatic communion (greeting exchange).

(11) SIMI. Heus tu qui cum hirquina barba stas,
announcement: responde quod rogo. /
BAL. Eho, an non prius salutas?
SIMI. Nulla est mihi salus dataria. /
BAL. Nam pol hinc tantundem accipies. [...] /
FTS: SIMI. Ecquem in angiporto hoc hominem tu novisti? te rogo. /
BAL. Egomet me. (*Pseud.* 967–972)

Unlike Nicobulus in (3a) Simia refuses to complete the opening sequence with the salutation ritual and proceeds directly to the first topic. The impoliteness of this exchange might be even higher, if we consider that (supposedly) both characters do not know each other. Hence the mere announcement move does not necessarily stand for a whole (negative) politeness strategy.

2.3. UNMITIGATED FTS PLACING

The less preferred way of making the transition to the goal-oriented phase is the insertion of the first topic with no mitigation whatsoever. In this case the speaker who ‘gets to the point’ directly is ignoring both the face needs of his interlocutor and the textual cohesion of the dialogue. We have already

[25] The appellative interjection *heus* is considered to have authoritarian meaning, since it only appears in masculine discourse, especially when addressed by a master to a slave – cf. Hofmann 1926, 15. R. Müller (1997, 23) identifies the same pragmatic implications of *heus* also in the Terentian corpus.

seen an example of such a brusque way of the FTS placing in (3b), the scene where Misargyrides were ‘casting a javelin’ on his interlocutor. The violent reaction of Tranio, moreover, may suggest the interactional risk of a non mitigated transition of this sort.

In other examples quite regularly the FTS takes form of a question or—slightly less often—requests and orders, which are pronounced by the initiator just after establishing the contact. Not always, however, the unmitigated transition can be associated with an intentional face threatening act, like it was the case of Misargyrides and Tranio (3b). If the relations between the interlocutors are close enough, and if they both seem to be giving priority to the goal achieving agenda (over the interpersonal matters), the FTS may be placed abruptly with no apparent damage to any of the parties. On the other hand, Plautus is probably choosing the short model, whenever his intention is to accelerate the progression of the dialogue and—accordingly—of the plot. It seems even more justifiable when the depiction of the interpersonal relation among the characters has already been explored on the stage and there is no need for another ritualistic opening with a multi-turn device.

Therefore this variant of transition appears between two neighbors (12a) or a husband and his wife (12b) in a scene of a quarrel. In these cases the phatic part is either minimal or acquires highly sarcastic tone.

(12a) ALC. [...] salve, Cleostrata.
CLEO. Et tu, Alcesime. / **ubi tua uxor?** (*Cas.* 541–542)

(12b) CLEO. Iubeo te salvere, amator.
LYS. *aside.* [...] /
MYR. Quid agis, dismarite?
CLEO. **Mi vir, unde hoc ornatu advenis?** (*Cas.* 969–974)

Apart from that, the direct FTS placing is quite fitting in a dialogue between a citizen and a subordinate servant (13a, 13b, 13c) or a despicable pimp (13d). Here the transition moment is expected to be decided by the socially dominant interlocutor. Even a clever slave, while talking to characters relatively lower in hierarchy does not have to use any sophisticated FTS placing device (13e, 14).

(13a) SYRA. Salve, alumnule. /
EUT. **Iam mater rure redit?** Responde mihi. (*Cas.* 809–810)

(13b) TRA. O Theopropides, / ere, salve, salvom te advenisse gaudeo. / usquin valuisti?
THEO. Usque ut vides.
TRA. Factum optime. /
THEO. **Quid vos? insanine estis?** (*Most.* 447–449)

(13c) TRA. [...] di te ament plurumu, Simo. /
SIMO. Salvos sis, Tranio.
TRA. Ut vales?
SIMI. Non male. / quid agis?
TRA. Hominem optumum teneo. [...]
SIMI. **Quid nunc? quam mox— ?**
TRA. Quid est?
SIMI. Quod solet fieri hic intus. (*Most.* 717–722)

(13d) AGO. Salvos sis, leno.
LYC. De te ament, Agorastocles. / [...]
AGO. **Mitte ad me, si audes, hodie Adelphasium tuam**. (*Poen.* 751–757)

(13e) TRA. [...] salvete, fures maritimi [...] quid agitis? ut peritis? /
PIS. Ut piscatorem aequom est, fame sitique speque falsa. /
TRA. **Ecquem adulescentem huc, dum hic astatis, expedite,** / **vidistis**...
(*Rud.* 310–314)

In order to summarize this section, let us comment on a ludic re-elaboration of this variant. The first turn in the dialogue opening between the pimp Dordalus and the slave Toxilus (14) seems to contain tokens of phaticity: the ceremonious interjection *o(h)!* and a greeting formula with a nominal identification (*Toxile, quid agitur?*). The addressee, nonetheless, responds with a series of dysphemic epithets (*lutum lenonium*...) in order to introduce, in the following move, the FTS not once but in five (!) different versions: from question-requests to offers and orders.

(14) DOR. Oh, / Toxile, quid agitur?
TOX. Oh, lutum lenonium, / [...]
FTS#1: accipin argentum?
FTS#2: accipe sis argentum, impudens, (412) /
FTS#3: tene sis argentum,
FTS#4: etiam tu argentum tenes? /
FTS#5: possum te facere ut argentum accipias, lutum? / non mihi censebas copiam argenti fore, / qui nisi iurato mihi nil ausu's credere? /
DOR**.** Sine respirare me, ut tibi respondeam. / vir summe populi, stabulum servitutium, / [...]
resp#1: cedo sis mi argentum,
resp#2: da mihi argentum, impudens, (422) /
resp#3: possum a te exigere argentum?
resp#4: argentum, inquam, cedo, /
resp#5: quin tu mi argentum reddis? nilne te pudet? / leno te argentum poscit, solida servitus, / pro liberanda amica, ut omnes audiant (*Persa* 405–26)

The pimp reciprocates this verbal attack with the exact sequence of moves: the enumeration of insults followed by a series of responses (marked here as

'resp') in an analogous form of directive acts.[26] Thus, by accumulation of moves which pertain to potentially impolite transition model Plautus has hyperbolized their interactional meaning. As a result we are given a farcical conversation opening emphasizing the eternal hostility between the comedy slave and the pimp. On the other hand, once again the abuse and the over-use of the linguistic tokens seems to be the most salient feature of the Plautine communication style.

2.4. COLLABORATIVE MODEL (THE ADDRESSEE'S INITIATIVE)

Until now we have analyzed only the FTS transitions initiated by the first speaker, the one who 'has some business to be done'. The other interlocutor, however, may also fill the so-called 'anchor position,'[27] where the reason-for-the-talk is conventionally expected to appear. The simplest form of this kind of opening sequence is when the addressee is aware of the other party's intentions. In this case the summoned character may decide to introduce (15a) the FTS on behalf of the initiator.

(15a) SIMO. Salvom te advenisse peregre gaudeo, Theopropides. /
THEO. Di te ament.
SIMO. **Inspicere te aedis has velle aiebat mihi**. /
THEO. Nisi tibi est incommodum.
SIMO. Immo commodum. i intro atque inspice. (*Most.* 805–7)

(15b) CHAR. **Filiam meam tibi desponsam esse audio**.
LYS. Nisi tu nevis. / CHAR. Immo hau nolo.
LYS. Sponden ergo tuam gnatam uxorem mihi? (*Trin.* 1156–7)

By predicting the reason-for-the-talk and making the transition him/herself the addressee is helping to save the interlocutor's face. Hence this collaborative variant is typical for some formal occasions like the visit in a neighbor's house (15a) or asking a father for his daughter's hand (15b).[28]

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[26] It is worth noting that in both series of directives (FTS#1-5 and resp#1-5) Plautus achieved different illocutionary force by a *variatio* of the pragmatic modifiers (*sis*, interrogative particle – *n*, periphrasis *possum te facere, ut...*), although there is no great variety of the content-oriented vocabulary (*accipere, tenere, argentum*).

[27] SCHEGLOFF 1973, 116.

[28] Cf. the initiative of the pimp, when he proposes a transition to the FTS in a dialogue with a potential client (*Poen.* 688: LYC. *Hospitium te aiunt quaeritare.* COL. *Quaerito*). The initiator of the contact may also induce the interlocutor to ask him/her for the-reason-for-the-talk by displaying in the opening phase pensative mood (*Aul.* 549–50) or emotional agitation (*Asin.* 629–30,

There are also more complex devices used by the addressee. The most elaborate multi-turn variant accompanies an exchange between two citizens unknown to each other. The young Plesidippus intends to inquire an old man and his slave he meets on the shore (16). Since the phatic communion is being constantly interrupted by the servant, the *senex* Daemones decides to invite his interlocutor to introduce the goal-oriented talk with the FTS-request. Plesidippus appreciates this gesture but, instead of placing the FTS directly, he prefers to launch the announcement move in order to get (once again) the old man's approval.

(16) **FTS-request:** DAE. [...] **quid opus<t>, adulescens?**
announcement#1: PLE. [...] / nisi molestumst, paucis percontarier / volo ego ex te.
approval: DAE. Dabitur opera atque in negotio. / [...] tu si quid opus est dice.
announcement#2 PLE. Dic quod te rogo. /
FTS: ecquem tu hic hominem crispum, incanum videris... (*Rud.* 118–21)

Eventually, the youth—after yet another pre-sequence (*dic quod te rogo*)—expresses his conversational goal. This extended collaborative model, therefore, was motivated strictly by the context of the interaction and the formal relations between two high characters.

Slightly less complex is the single-turn variant with the FTS-request preceded by some additional mitigating move. Since the model goes parallel to the devices used by the contact initiator which we have described in the previous sections (see section 2.2), the request for transition might be introduced either by closing PT (17) or some form of the announcement move (18)—here most frequently we find the particle *sed*. This kind of FTS placing device is typical for the scenes where one character suddenly appears on the stage (e.g. approaching the door or getting out of the house) like in (18a-d). In these situation it is rather evident that the contact initiator has some conversational agenda to achieve. Hence the summoned character simply asks for the reason-for-the-talk with some announcing move: the context of these encounters does not favor 'beating around the bush'. The mitigated model, on the other hand, is justified by not knowing the interlocutor (18b, 18c) or, on the contrary, by being his close friend like in case of Libanus (18b), who by FTS-request tries to close a very long small talk sequence with Leonida.

Epid. 560, *Merc.* 285). The same effect is also achieved by expressing unconventional enthusiasm while greeting the other part (*Epid*. 202–3, *Mil*. 170–1, *Pseud*. 1065). In all those cases the summoned interlocutor feels s/he should ask for the context of this non-ritualistic behavior. Accordingly, it is easier for the initiator to insert the FTS on demand.

(17) **closing PT**: LIB. Verbivelitationem fieri compendi volo. /
FTS-request: Quid istud est negoti?
LEO. Certum est credere.
LIB. Audacter.
FTS: LEO. Licet. / Sis amanti subvenire familiari filio (*Asin*. 307–9)

(18a) **announcement**: AMPH. [...] sed
FTS request: quid tu foras / egressa es?
FTS: BRO. Eadem nos formido timidas terrore impulit (*Amph*. 1078–9)

(18b) **announcement**: LIB. [...] sed
FTS request: quid venis? quid quaeritas?
FTS: MER. Demaenetum volebam (*Asin*. 392)

(18c) **announcement**: PHAN. [...] sed
FTS request: quid quaeritas?
FTS: HAL. Vestigium hic requiro (*Cist*. 724)

(18d) **announcement**: LYC. [...] sed
FTS request: quid nunc voltis? [...] /
FTS: ADVO. Nunc hunc, Lyce, ad te diripiundum adducimus (*Poen*. 644–6)

There are as well the unmitigated variant composed only by the FTS-request (19) responded with the turn in which the initiator of the contact reveals his/her intentions.

(19a) **FTS request** : MER. [...] **quid nunc vis?**
FTS: AMPH. Sceleste, at etiam quid velim, id tu me rogas? (*Amph.* 1025)

(19b) **FTS request:** STA. **Quid vis?**
FTS: STRO. Hos ut accipias coquos (*Aul*. 351)

(19c) **FTS request:** PHAN. **Quid agis hic?**
FTS: LAM. Quod gaudeas (*Cist*. 545)

It accompanies, quite obviously, the knocking-at-the-door scenes (*pulsatio*)—like in (19a, 19b)—or very direct contacts between a servant and his/her owner (19b, 19c). Here the strict interpersonal matters and the dialogue cohesion are overtly ignored.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In the previous sections we argued that the pre-sequences serve to introduce (or merely imply) the negotiation over the FTS placement, which was the counterpart for the direct and unmitigated transition. In fact the same function may be fulfilled by any kind of indirectness like, for instance, when one of the party implicitly is announcing the transition or is indirectly ex-

pressing his/her readiness to engage in the goal-oriented exchange. By this we mean a more complex negotiations over the phatic or non-phatic interpretation of the utterances inside the dialogue opening, which lead to a more harmonious transition with no need for explicit formulae. We elaborate on this phenomenon elsewhere.

In this paper, however, the main focus was on the linguistic tokens of transition and their organization in sequences of moves and in turns of speech. Firstly, it goes without saying that the FTS is most frequently inserted by the initiator of the dialogue, although there are some cases to be found, where the other party also collaborates in this maneuver. Moreover, the transition may be launched in consultation—either factual or implied—with the interlocutor. The least elaborate and the most brusque exchanges, on the other hand, contained a more authoritarian variant of an unmitigated FTS placement.

Accordingly, we have distinguished (i) multi-turn and (ii) single-turn models which may be executed by any of the speaker. In most of the cases discussed above the election of one of those variants can be explained by the external context for the encounter or, more importantly, by the relation between the participants of the interaction. Also the type of the conversational goals (request, reproach, inquiry etc.) may have some influence on the complexity of the transition maneuver. In general, more formal interaction (e.g. with an unknown speaker, a business transaction) tend to take form of a multi-turn negotiations, especially if both the interlocutors are high characters. Also the friendly encounters frequently make use of a more complex variants in order to maintain—as long as possible—the illusion of a dialogue started casually and without any hidden agenda. The direct ways of placing the FTS, on the other hand, are typical for master-slave relations or for any conversation opening that, by some plot-related reason, does not focus on the interpersonal aspects of the dialogue.

Finally, one should not overlook that most of the variants here presented also get a ludic re-elaboration. The farcical repetition, accumulation and exaggeration of certain pragmatic functions—on the level both of the sequence of moves and the whole exchanges—must be considered a distinguishable feature of the Plautine style.

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INTRODUCING THE FIRST TOPIC SLOT IN PLAUTINE DIALOGUES

Summary

The Plautine dialogues seem to be structured according to the conventions of naturally occurring conversation. This paper examines the transition devices from the (ritualistic) opening phase to the goal-oriented part, where the reason-for-the-talk is disclosed. Firstly, the difference between the phatic preliminary remarks (small talk) and the actual first topic is briefly discussed. Further on, the analysis of the Plautine corpus reveals various ways of making the transition to the medial phase: from multi-turn sequences to single-turn conversational moves. It is stated that the most complex negotiations over the first topic slot placement are a feature of symmetric interactions among high characters with friendly relations. Accordingly, more direct linguistic devices of introducing the reason-for-the-talk appear typically in slave-master dialogues or in aggressive or farcical exchanges between low characters. Some cases, moreover, show that also the wider context of interaction or the dramaturgical factors (depiction of a stock character, progression of the plot etc.) affects the election of the transition style. Finally, throughout the paper some tentative comments are made as well on the politeness issues strictly related to the selection of the linguistic tokens of introducing the first topic slot.

Key words: Plautus; conversation opening; first topic slot; dialogue structure; medial phase.

PRZECHODZENIE DO PIERWSZEGO TEMATU ROZMOWY W DIALOGACH PLAUTA

Streszczenie

Komediowe dialogi Plauta zdają się posiadać zewnętrzną strukturę zgodną z konwencjami codziennej rozmowy. W niniejszym artykule badane są mechanizmy przechodzenia z (rytualnej) fazy otwierającej do części dialogu zorientowanej na realizację celów konwersacyjnych, w której inicjator kontaktu wyjawia swoją motywację. W pierwszej kolejności pokrótce nakreśla się różnicę między tematem prowizorycznym (*small talk*) a właściwym pierwszym (niefatycznym) tematem rozmowy. Dalsza analiza Plautyńskiego korpusu ujawnia współwystępowanie różnych mechanizmów przejścia do fazy środkowej dialogu: od wieloturowych sekwencji wypowiedzi po model jednoturowy. Bardziej złożone negocjacje wokół miejsca wprowadzenia pierwszego tematu wydają się typowe dla symetrycznych interakcji między wysokimi postaciami pozostającymi

w przyjacielskich relacjach. Bezpośrednie przejścia z kolei pojawiają się w dialogach między panem a niewolnikami lub agresywnymi i farsowymi wymianami między niskimi postaciami. Niektóre cytowane przypadki ponadto sugerują, że na wybór modelu przejścia *ad rem* mają wpływ także szerszy kontekst spotkania oraz względy dramaturgiczne (charakterystyka postaci, postęp akcji itp.). Wreszcie w artykule przewijają się uwagi dotyczące zjawiska językowej grzeczności, która wydaje się ściśle związana z wyborem stylu wprowadzenia pierwszego tematu.

Słowa kluczowe: Plaut; otwarcie konwersacyjne; pierwszy temat rozmowy; struktura dialogu; faza środkowa.