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Subtitled artefacts as communication – the case of Ocean’s Eleven Scene 12

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ABSTRACT
This article examines how Ocean’s Eleven’s (Soderbergh, 2001) Scene 12 and its English DVD subtitles can be analysed and understood from the perspective of the pragmatics of fiction and more generally pragmatics and communication studies. Examples from the scene are used to describe the film’s participation structures. Communication with film viewers is approached from a cognitive-pragmatic perspective and in terms of Grice’s Cooperative Principle. Agency in this communicative setting is discussed from the perspective of Constitutive Communication Theory. On the example of Scene 12, the article provides specific insights into the meaning of the scene in the context of the film as well as within communication between collective sender and the film’s audience, and it demonstrates the usefulness of pragmatic theories for the understanding of subtitled film in general. Interlingual subtitles are instrumentalised as access points to film scenes in the first part, and they are discussed as situated language in the second part.

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1. Introduction

From the point of view of the pragmatics of fiction, films are sites of language use. The understanding of a film scene by audiences is informed by their role as co-constructors of meaning who – based on the artefact they engage with – make sense of the film’s actions and interactions. Audience understanding and ultimately the meaning of a film scene can thus be explained with the help of tenets of pragmatic theories and by discussing the communicative practices within film and film reception. The linguistic and non-linguistic acts of communication that inform such a pragmatic understanding of film are located on at least two different communicative levels (see e.g., Brock, 2015; Dynel, 2011; Messerli, 2017a): on the level of interacting characters and on the level of the film viewers engaging with the film scene as part of an audiovisual artefact.

Within the context of audiovisual translation studies, the focus of a pragmatics of fiction extends to the translation products that have become a part of the cinematic artefact. The intralingual English subtitles included here for discussion are themselves representations of language in use and at the same time serve as a voice that communicates with film viewers. This study will first instrumentalise the intralingual
English subtitles as mere access points to the discussed parts of the scene, i.e., as a pre-existing broad transcription of the spoken dialogue that provides a point of reference for the reader to find the discussed phenomena in the multimodal film scene (Section 2). Subsequently, applications of pragmatic principles to the scene will then also be discussed in terms of the communicative functions of subtitling that are manifest in the intralingual English subtitles available on the DVD (Section 3).

The pragmatics of fiction approach to Scene 12 of Ocean’s Eleven (2001) will be guided by the following main research questions:

(1) What can linguistic pragmatic theories contribute to the analysis of a film scene?
(2) What are particular pragmatic aspects that can inform a reading of Scene 12 in the context of the film and the film’s reception by audiences?
(3) What is the pragmatic role of intralingual subtitles for the meaning of a film scene?

Whereas the first question is interested in mappings of pragmatic theory to subtitled film more generally, addressing the second question will provide concrete readings of how actions and utterances in Scene 12 can be analysed with regard to their contribution to the film (e.g., its plot) and to the ongoing communication between filmmakers and audiences. The third question, finally, opens the door to different understandings of intralingual subtitles and their contribution to the meaning of, in this case, Scene 12 of Ocean’s Eleven.

This study’s pragmatic approach to Scene 12 will first address the communicative setting and participation structures of film, i.e., participant roles on different communicative levels (Section 2.1), as central to the understanding of communication in and of fiction, and context for the discussion of other pragmatic aspects. In this and subsequent sections, I will start with a brief outline of relevant theoretical concepts (2.1.1), followed by exemplification and discussion of possible applications to the scene (2.1.2). I will then turn to cognitive effects of communication in this setting (2.2) as a platform for considering the relationship between what is uttered and what is intended, meant and understood using Grice’s cooperative principle and implicatures on different levels (2.3). The different agents that take part in the meaning-making within this scene and the key role of agency are further explored in 2.4 from the perspective of a constitutive theory of communication. Section 3 focuses on the role of subtitles for the communicative acts described for Scene 12’s source dialogue in earlier parts of the article, as the last stage before concluding the pragmatics-driven overview that it provides.
viewers jointly imagine that the characters and actions and utterances that are part of the fiction have at least some agency. However, while an idealised immersed viewer may – in Goffman’s (1979) terms – understand the uttering character to be the animator (who voices the utterance), author (who composes the utterance) and principal (who is responsible for the utterance) at the same time, it is safe to assume that viewers also know that they are engaging with a fictional artefact.

Like fiction more generally (Androutsopoulos, 2012) and other types of enacted performances, such as drama (Burger, 1984, 1991; Burger & Luginbühl, 2014; Short, 1981, 1989), fictional films thus communicate on two levels at the same time (Bednarek, 2010; Dynel, 2011; Kozloff, 2000; Messerli, 2017a; Piazza, Bednarek, & Rossi, 2011), and viewers can be aware of both levels, perhaps even simultaneously (Brock, 2015). On the character level, spoken dialogues are stylised representations of face-to-face interaction that act on the characters’ behalf. The film viewers are not directly represented on this level, but they can imagine themselves to be overhearers (Bubel, 2006, 2008) who follow an interaction of which they are not ratified participants. On the level of the collective sender, the same dialogue serves as a communicative device designed for the film viewers. For both levels, the setting and participants can be defined separately, but fully understanding the way language is used in a film scene necessitates awareness that film dialogues are shaped both by the fact that they pretend to be uttered by characters and at the same time are designed for an audience.

2.1.2. Application to the scene

The cinematic duality of communicative levels means for Scene 12 in Ocean’s Eleven (2001) that it first of all consists of a conversation between two characters, Frank and Bill. Secondly, it is a film scene designed for the benefit of the viewers by the collective sender, i.e., director Soderbergh, writers Johnson and Russell, and all others involved in the film’s production. Within a car dealership setting, the prospective buyer, Frank, and the seller, Bill, are the ratified speakers of the scene and take turns being speaker and addressee. On this level, each of the characters is animator, author and principal of their utterances, although the set of beliefs that motivates the conversational turns is at least partly shaped by the other group members of Danny Ocean’s Eleven in the case of Frank, and by the car dealership in the case of Bill. On the film level, Frank and Bill animate what the collective sender has principaled and authored, and they converse in a manner that is optimised for the viewers’ understanding and with a clearly defined narrative purpose, i.e., to show and tell viewers how the Ocean’s Eleven crew manages to find suitable transport for their endeavour.

Example 1:

1 Well, I am sorry, but $18,500 a piece is the best offer that I can make.
2 Well, I understand.
3 - They are some great-looking vans.
   - Yes, sir, top of the line.
4 - Okay. Thank you for your time, Mr … ?
   - Denham. Billy Tim Denham.
The first four subtitles in the scene, as shown in Example 1, can serve as a representation of an interaction between two cooperative participants (section 2.3). In this orderly sequence of alternating turns, they seem to jointly establish that no agreement can be found on the price of the vans. The same lines communicate to the viewers that within the list of preparatory steps for the heist, we are now witnessing how the group manages to organise transportation, and that this step starts with unsuccessful negotiation. At the start of the scene, we are shown an interaction that for the characters seems to have been in progress for some time – Frank is already in the dealership, Bill’s first turn appears to be a reply as well as the endpoint of a negotiation. For us viewers, on the other hand, it starts at this moment, but the characters provide all the information that we need to understand the scene.

Looking beyond the subtitles, the scene also illustrates the importance of the layered communicative setting of film discourse: The positioning of Frank and Bill is a compromise between (1) face-to-face interaction in the context of a business transaction (standing and facing each other in the middle of a dealership) and (2) cinematic conventions that facilitate viewer reception (standing close enough to each other to be captured in a single frame and at enough of an angle that their faces are visible). Throughout the scene, this duality of each utterance continues: The characters do not acknowledge the camera, yet the audience sees close-ups of the speaker or a relevant detail; it is daytime and the sole light source in the dealership are the windows, yet Frank’s face is illuminated even when he faces away from the window.

In sum, taking into account the participation structures leads to an understanding of Frank’s and Bill’s conversation as taking place on two levels, but as realised in one single scene. This scene amalgamates the participation properties of the two levels and is both a representation of a car sale and the cinematic realisation of a part of the film’s exposition. From a film studies perspective, the particular double-realisation in Scene 12 can be situated within existing traditions of filmic representation. From a pragmatic perspective, the sample can be used to further discuss the joint construction of meaning within this layered setting.

### 2.2. Joint action and meaning-making

#### 2.2.1. Theoretical background

The description of participation roles in section 2.1 can also be used as a starting point for a cognitive-pragmatic analysis. Clark (1996) assumes that ‘Language use is really a form of joint action’ (3). From this perspective, communication requires coordination between participants, and – in the tradition of Stalnaker (1974, 2002) it rests on common ground (CG), which can be either achieved conventionally (communal CG) or through shared experiences (personal CG). These two components of common ground have also been conceptualised as core and emergent common ground (Gibbs & Colston, 2017; Kecskes, 2008; Kecskes & Zhang, 2009), which highlights that situated meaning can only partially be explained through pre-existing assumptions and needs to take into account dynamic processes of meaning-making that are negotiated in interaction. Communication is thus based on a set of shared assumptions as well as the ongoing interaction, with speakers and listeners jointly doing work to make sure meaning has been successfully communicated. This is to
say that they ground communication, for instance by requesting and providing evidence of understanding (Clark, 1996, p. 252).

2.2.2. Application to the scene

Example 2:
5 - Denham like a jean.
   - That’s it. Just like the jean.
6 Man, you got some lovely hands here.
   Do you moisturize?
7 - I am sorry?
   - I’ve tried lots of lotion.

Example 2 provides several instances of grounding on the character level: The first line in subtitle 5 ('Denham like a jean') is a direct response to the second line in subtitle 4 ('Denham. Billy Tim Denham.' Example 1) and provides evidence that the name has been understood. This confirmation is encoded as a comparison based on the (near-) homophony Denham/Denim, and triggers another confirmation in the second line, realised as partial repetition. ‘I am sorry?’ in line 7, on the other hand, explicitly encodes that communication has been unsuccessful and serves as an invitation for clarification. On this level, communal CG is manifest in the assumption and confirmation that both participants know that jeans are made of denim, whereas personal CG appears for instance in the deictic expression ‘here’, which rests on the assumption of shared awareness of the conversational setting, as well as in the absence of deixis in the first line. This initial line indicates that both participants understand ‘Denham like a jean’ as an elaboration of Bill stating his last name, even when that link is not explicated.

Some of these joint actions on the character level have almost identical effects on the level of the collective sender. For instance, the collective sender assumes that the target audience also shares the characters’ knowledge of such things as denim, jeans, and the organisation of talk in English. However, since communication on this level is asymmetrical, i.e., in a traditional viewing setting the viewers have no way of providing evidence that they understood the meaning, there can be no examples of grounding. There is evidence in this scene, however, that the collective sender assumes extended CG with the viewers. In terms of communal CG, viewers are assumed to recognise, for instance, that the scene is in a car dealership and that Bill is someone who is in a position to sell vans to Frank. Moreover, it is taken for granted that viewers are familiar with narrative devices of film-making such as continuity editing and are thus able to understand the sequence of individual shots from different perspectives as a continuous narrative scene. Personal CG keeps building up over the course of the film, so that viewers know at this point who Frank is and what goal he pursues in the interaction with Bill.

A focus on aspects of common ground thus foregrounds the contribution of individual utterances and subtitles to the inferred meaning-making of fictional characters and thus also to character development; and it highlights how audiences may understand fictional scenes based not only on the onscreen actions they perceive, but also the tacit collective sender assumptions encoded in the text. Assuming that mainstream films are typically designed for wide audiences, the latter dimension also allows a critical look at the beliefs and values that collective senders include into core common ground, i.e., aspects of meaning that do not need to be negotiated in the ongoing
mediated communication through film, but are taken for granted on the production side of the film.

2.3. Communication as cooperation

2.3.1. Theoretical background

The sequence of turns that starts with ‘Man, you got some lovely hands here’ (see subtitle 6, example 2) also points to the central pragmatic distinction between the linguistic realisation of an utterance and its performative function. According to speech act theory, speakers perform actions when they talk (Austin, 1962). These actions are governed by rules (Searle, 1969, p. 22) or by maxims that describe the listeners’ expectations (Grice, 1991). To understand what a speaker’s utterance means is to take into account context as it was described in sections 2.1 and 2.2, and to infer intended meaning based on the relationship between the utterance and its context. While Austin’s (1962) categorisation of illocutionary force and Searle’s (1969) exploration of reference and proposition could both be exemplified with Scene 12, it is Grice’s cooperative principle (CP) that serves as a particularly fruitful theoretical background for an analysis of the scene.

The central assumption of Grice’s (1991) CP is that conversationalists are cooperative, i.e., they assume for their utterances ‘a mutually accepted direction’ (Grice, 1991, p. 307) and follow a set of tacit conversational maxims that are directly connected to that direction. These maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner predict that conversationalists expect utterances to be as informative, truthful, relevant and transparent as the perceived direction or purpose of talk requires. Two things are important to note here: (1) Rather than being commandments, the maxims are expected conversational norms or benchmarks against which actual utterances are measured. (2) The specific maxims within each of the categories vary depending on the assumed purpose of talk. That speakers are assumed to be rational and cooperative means that when they do not observe the maxims thought to be in place for the particular situation, non-observance may lead to particular paths of inference on the hearer’s side: Flouting a maxim serves as a conversational implicature that has the hearer look for meaning beyond what is said, literally or conventionally.

2.3.2. Application to the scene

Within film, analysing meaning based on implicatures and Gricean conversational maxims again necessitates taking into account the two communicative levels of film communication. To begin with, the perceived purpose of talk needs to be defined separately for characters and for viewers. In Scene 12, one of the premises for Billy and Frank is that they are engaging in negotiations about the price of the vans that Frank wants to purchase. The viewers, on the other hand, also expect that this conversation is part of the story Ocean’s Eleven (2001), which they are being told cinematically by the collective sender. As a result, different maxims can be formulated for each of the levels, and the same utterance can conversationally implicate different meanings for the interacting characters and for the film viewers.

A case in point is the account Frank gives of his own experiences with manicure. When he starts his anecdote (example 2, subtitle 6), his contribution is expected to be relevant to the ongoing conversation (characters) or scene (viewers). For instance, that Frank asked...
for Billy’s name immediately before this utterance may have been interpreted as a step towards closing the conversation, which could now be continued. The compliment and question about moisturising, however, do not move the conversation towards an end, nor do they seem relevant to the ongoing sale. There can be no question that Billy understands the simple yes/no question he is asked – ‘do you moisturize?’ – but at this point in the conversation, it appears that he is unable to arrive at a satisfying interpretation of Frank’s utterance. Accordingly, Billy responds with ‘I’m sorry?’ which conventionally implicates a request for clarification. Frank’s subsequent anecdote is neither brief, nor does it make transparent his intentions, but Billy does not ask for clarification again. This is so because now Billy seems to understand what Frank is implicating: Since the only perceivable link to the situation is the reference to Billy’s hand which Frank is simultaneously holding, the implicature can be understood as a gesture towards the ongoing handshake, and with it the threat that is realised by means of that handshake.

The only agents who are literally inferring meaning in this scene are of course the viewers. On the character level, viewers infer meaning that is based on what they see and hear in the film and governed by specific maxims, which need not be formulated here in detail but will include expectations about car sales as well as about film. And whatever statements were made here about Billy’s inferences are in fact the result of myself as a viewer inferring what the character inferred. In addition to those processes, at least some viewers will also try to arrive at the meaning that is implicated by the collective sender. On this level, implicatures can be further discussed as a result of multimodal communication. For instance, reading shots from alternating perspectives as a cohesive conversation is the result of a conventional cinematic implicature that can be described as part of continuity editing. Finally, a case of cinematic conversational implicature appears in the first shot of Scene 12, which shows unidentified characters jumping up and down on the back of a van. While the characters and action in the foreground are of no consequence and the scene thus flouts the maxim of relevance, focusing on the background and the object on which they are jumping reveals that the shot implicates the location of the scene, i.e., the car dealership.

2.4. Constitutive communication

2.4.1. Theoretical background

For the final theoretical vantage point in this paper, I look to Cooren’s (2004, 2010, 2012) Constitutive Theory of Communication, which I have previously adapted to sitcom humour (Messerli, 2017b). While not strictly speaking a pragmatic theory, this framework is based on the same central tenets of situated language use and performativity and foregrounds one action performed through language use in particular: To communicate is to ventriloquise, i.e., to animate into being, the agents on whose behalf the communication occurs. Cooren (2012) illustrates how within organisational communication abstract entities such as companies are made to exist through the communicative acts that happen on their behalf. This aspect is particularly fit to be transferred to the film’s collective sender who primarily exists through the film’s actions.

One central element to this understanding of constitution is an expansion of the concept of agency to include things and texts. Textual agency means, for instance, that a note in a hospital can do actions that go beyond those that its authors could do
without it (Cooren, 2012, pp. 28–31), and accordingly communication is constituted by and constitutes a chain of agency. The numerous participants in film communicate through a particular hierarchical order, which ends in the sum of auditory and visual stimuli onscreen. These utterances, actions, gestures, etc. at the film surface are the only manifest agents that directly communicate to film viewers, but traces of other agents further upstream transpire through that surface. Viewers infer, and films implicate, on whose behalf the directly visible and audible agents speak, and those agents further up the chain – akin to Goffman’s (1979) principals – are found within or without the fictional world.

2.4.2. Application to the scene

Example 3:

13 Let me tell you something.
   If you could pay cash …
14 … I could drop that
   down to seven - -
15 Sixteen each
16 - no?
   - yes, sir.
17 - You’d do that?
   - Yes, sir.
18 That’d be lovely.
   They told me to see you.
19 - Well I’m glad they did.
   - They told me.
20 Well, let me go get the paperwork.
   You just wait here at the table.
21 - You do that.
   - Thank you.

It seems trivial to say that the subtitles in Example 3 communicate that – contrary to earlier indications – Frank will be able to successfully conclude his endeavour and purchase the vans. However, the sounds and visual stimuli that implicate this to viewers are in fact endpoints of several chains of agency which are conventional and may go unnoticed. To begin with, human multi-modal perception allows for the film sounds and images to construct a common source (Vroomen & de Gelder, 2004), so that hearing a voice through the speakers and seeing Frank moving his lips (nearly) synchronously will lead to the interpretation that we hear Frank talk. Frank in this sense is also more than the two-dimensional image of Frank we see on screen: We understand that this image-Frank is there to represent a character Frank, who can act and think in ways similar to a human being, and who exists within a similarly constructed fictional world.

In this fictional world, Frank wants to purchase a van not for himself, but for the group – Ocean’s Eleven – and thus may also speak on their behalf. At the same time, Frank is also a part of the multiple voices that are at the disposal of some form of narrative instance (O’Neill, 1994), which I will again call the collective sender. As such, Frank and Billy are also examples of those agents that create Scene 12, a narrative segment within the film Ocean’s Eleven (2001) that we understand to be of some significance to the overall story that we are being told. In turn, Ocean’s Eleven (2001) only exists through the scenes that constitute it. There are numerous other agents that cannot be discussed in detail
here, from the actors that exist through their roles, to the directors that contribute to the creation of the film and are only directors through those films, to film production and distribution companies that likewise animate films into being and at the same time are animated into being through films, through *Ocean’s Eleven* (2001), through Scene 12, through the conclusion of Frank and Billy’s transactional conversation, through Billy saying ‘Sixteen each’, through ‘sixteen each’ being audible through the speakers at the same time as the image of a man moving his lips.

In terms of its agencies, Scene 12 can be read as a typical and well-defined conversational scene in a mainstream film. If, say, in a class on pragmatics or communication students were asked what they saw and heard in Scene 12, who spoke and what was said, all of the agencies mentioned here might find their way into their answers. Some examples might be: Frank threatened Bill and managed to lower the price; Ocean’s eleven found a way to organise transport for their heist; Steven Soderbergh is subtly hinting at violence by including close-ups of the handshake in the scene; the heist-movie is exemplified in the scene’s conflation of violence and entertainment; and so on. Through this focus on the different agents that are involved in film communication, the complex communicative setting of film becomes particularly tangible. In addition, the dual direction of constitution is notable: Billy only says what he says because we are watching the scene and because the collective sender wrote and performed the dialogue, and likewise the collective sender and we as viewers only exist through the sum of all these communicative acts.

### 3. The role of (intralingual) subtitles

Section 2 has used the English subtitles as a textual representation and basis for a pragmatic discussion of Scene 12, but the role of these subtitles in communication has not yet been properly discussed. Subtitles are both the product of a diagonal translation process (Gottlieb, 1994), and at the same time a separate voice in the communication between a collective sender and the viewers of subtitled film (see also Messerli, 2019). From a pragmatic point of view, it is thus not only interesting to examine horizontally the relationship between subtitles as a target text and spoken film dialogue as a source text, but also vertically to study the interactions between subtitles as situated language use and their linguistic and non-linguistic cinematic context: What do the English and thus intralingual subtitles communicate?

As examples 1–3 have illustrated, the intralingual English DVD subtitles for Scene 12 represent the dialogue between Frank and Billy in normalised written standard English. This is to say that of the already stylised film dialogue, only some aspects are encoded in subtitling, while others, and in particular those that are related to the production of speech, are not represented. For instance, hesitation markers and semantic redundancies, such as exact lexical repetition or dialectal language variation (see Bonsignori, 2009), are absent from the subtitles. From the point of view of the viewers of the subtitled scene, the subtitles function as a communicative device that facilitates access to some aspects of meaning, while leaving intact almost all other available information. What is noteworthy here is the pre-processing constituted by subtitling and the translation choices that influence just what parts of the scene are to be highlighted for the viewers.
Example 4:

4 - Okay. Thank you for your time, Mr …?
   - Denham. Billy Tim Denham.

5 - Denham like a jean.
   - That’s it. Just like the jean.

Example 4 illustrates the effects of these subtitling choices in Scene 12. In subtitle 5, Frank creates a pun based on the near-homonymy between Billy’s last name, Denham, and the fabric denim. The subtitles here repeat the spelling of the last name and thus assume as common ground with the viewers that the pronunciation of Denham and denim is sufficiently similar to create a pun. The streaming subtitles that are broadcast on Netflix and other platforms, on the other hand (see article 4 in this special issue), identify the character as ‘Billy Tim Denim’ and thus make the pun explicit without assuming knowledge about English phonology. The two versions thus illustrate a choice between representativity and comprehensibility, i.e., the subtitle text either orients towards the language it represents (Denham is a name, Denim is not) or towards the target viewers.

The perspective of Constitutive Communication (section 2.4) can also be used as a heuristic to address the vertical perspective to subtitles, which are regarded as textual agents that can communicate on behalf of other agents. Looking for agency up the chain, one option is to locate it in an inferred subtitler who formulated the text. Subtitling as a process thus would have a performative effect that can be described as ‘the subtitler says that the (audibly) speaking character is saying x’. This would mean that apart from understanding the scene as such as communication from a collective sender, and the speaking character as a fictional agent, viewers would also need to be conceptualised on a third communicative level on which they simultaneously are the recipients of a transformation of the spoken dialogue into writing (i.e., the viewers are also subtitle readers).

A second option is to locate agency in the speaking character: The same perceptual ventriloquism effect that unites sound and image would also include the textual representation of the dialogue, and viewers could be said to simultaneously see and hear and read what the character is saying. Rather than understanding subtitles as separate entities, viewers could thus be said to use them as one of several access points to a dynamically evolving mental model of the fictional world, which ultimately does not reside on screen, but is constructed in each viewer’s mind.

The third option I want to mention specifically is locating agency in the collective sender who communicates through all the voices at their disposal. This is to say that subtitles function as one of the affordances through which collective senders may communicate their meaning to film viewers. Other agents that could be considered include actors as well as companies (production, subtitling, etc.).

The different agents are not mutually exclusive, but the subjective understanding of subtitles as communication on behalf of a particular agent can be influenced with the help of textual and paratextual cues. For instance, the meta-communicative message in the subtitles during the end credits of Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975) shift viewers towards understanding them as communicating on behalf of the collective sender:

We apologise for the fault in the subtitles. Those responsible have been sacked.

The sample from *Ocean’s Eleven* (2001) provides limited data to explore this aspect of agency further, and there are no unambiguous examples that would illustrate the foregrounding of a particular chain of agencies. At least, we may identify in the DVD subtitles of the *Denham/denim* pun in example 4 a missed opportunity to directly represent the pun Frank is making. And that in the entire scene the subtitles only very loosely match Frank’s and Billy’s conversational turns is another indication that no attempt is made to directly link subtitles to the speaking characters. However, to make robust claims about the textual foregrounding of chains of agency in subtitles, more and other data would need to be analysed.

4. Concluding remarks

I have presented some of the insights into Scene 12 from *Ocean’s Eleven* (2001) that can be gained by understanding the scene as situated language use and analysing it with the help of core tenets of pragmatic and communicative theoretical frameworks. The typicality of the scene for mainstream film-making means that most observations made here could also be made about other film scenes. The intralingual English subtitles that were included in the analysis can only partially reveal how subtitles work as communicative devices. They certainly facilitate access to meaning that is also encoded in the spoken dialogue, and they exemplify choices with regard to what is to be foregrounded for the target audience, which means that they pre-process certain aspects of the source text’s meaning. On whose behalf this pre-processing is done, however, is a question that needs to be answered based on another data set.

Finally, this exploration of situated language use in *Ocean’s Eleven’s* (2001) Scene 12 has demonstrated both that film presents data that is very rich and complex when it comes to communication and meaning-making, and that the very situatedness of language use, i.e., the context in which each communicative act takes place, favours longer data samples that make clearer the viewer reception processes in each case. Accordingly, this analysis has implicitly and explicitly included context that goes beyond the included excerpts, beyond the scene, and even beyond the film from which it was sampled. In this endeavour of understanding the different contexts of film and arriving at contextualised meanings of the intralingually subtitled Scene 12 of *Ocean’s Eleven*, a pragmatic understanding of the character utterances and actions is instrumental.

Note

1. Grice (1991) states that he has phrased his maxims with a particular purpose in mind, namely ‘as if this purpose were a maximally effective exchange of information’ (p. 308). However, he explicitly adds that they need to be generalised when referring to different purposes.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.
Notes on contributor

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