

Andrea Rocci and Louis de Saussure (Eds.)
Verbal Communication

Handbooks of Communication Science

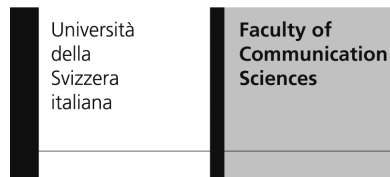
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Peter J. Schulz and Paul Cobley

Volume 3

Verbal Communication

Edited by
Andrea Rocci and Louis de Saussure

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Preface to *Handbooks of Communication Science* series

This volume is part of the series *Handbooks of Communication Science*, published from 2012 onwards by de Gruyter Mouton. When our generation of scholars was in their undergraduate years, and one happened to be studying communication, a series like this one was hard to imagine. There was, in fact, such a dearth of basic and reference literature that trying to make one's way in communication studies as our generation did would be unimaginable to today's undergraduates in the field. In truth, there was simply nothing much to turn to when you needed to cast a first glance at the key objects in the field of communication. The situation in the United States was slightly different; nevertheless, it is only within the last generation that the basic literature has really proliferated there.

What one did when looking for an overview or just a quick reference was to turn to social science books in general, or to the handbooks or textbooks from the neighbouring disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, linguistics, and probably other fields. That situation has changed dramatically. There are more textbooks available on some subjects than even the most industrious undergraduate can read. The representative key multi-volume *International Encyclopedia of Communication* has now been available for some years. Overviews of subfields of communication exist in abundance. There is no longer a dearth for the curious undergraduate, who might nevertheless overlook the abundance of printed material and Google whatever he or she wants to know, to find a suitable Wikipedia entry within seconds.

'Overview literature' in an academic discipline serves to draw a balance. There has been a demand and a necessity to draw that balance in the field of communication and it is an indicator of the maturing of the discipline. Our project of a multi-volume series of *Handbooks of Communication Science* is a part of this coming-of-age movement of the field. It is certainly one of the largest endeavours of its kind within communication sciences, with almost two dozen volumes already planned. But it is also unique in its combination of several things.

The series is a major publishing venture which aims to offer a portrait of the current state of the art in the study of communication. But it seeks to do more than just assemble our knowledge of communication structures and processes; it seeks to *integrate* this knowledge. It does so by offering comprehensive articles in all the volumes instead of small entries in the style of an encyclopedia. An extensive index in each *Handbook* in the series, serves the encyclopedic task of finding relevant specific pieces of information. There are already several handbooks in sub-disciplines of communication sciences such as political communication, methodology, organisational communication – but none so far has tried to comprehensively cover the discipline as a whole.

For all that it is maturing, communication as a discipline is still young and one of its benefits is that it derives its theories and methods from a great variety of work in other, and often older, disciplines. One consequence of this is that there is a variety of approaches and traditions in the field. For the *Handbooks* in this series, this has created two necessities: commitment to a pluralism of approaches, and a commitment to honour the scholarly traditions of current work and its intellectual roots in the knowledge in earlier times.

There is really no single object of communication sciences. However, if one were to posit one possible object it might be the human communicative act – often conceived as “someone communicates something to someone else.” This is the departure point for much study of communication and, in consonance with such study, it is also the departure point for this series of *Handbooks*. As such, the series does not attempt to adopt the untenable position of understanding communication sciences as the study of everything that can be conceived as communicating. Rather, while acknowledging that the study of communication must be multifaceted or fragmented, it also recognizes two very general approaches to communication which can be distinguished as: a) the semiotic or linguistic approach associated particularly with the humanities and developed especially where the Romance languages have been dominant and b) a quantitative approach associated with the hard and the social sciences and developed, especially, within an Anglo-German tradition. Although the relationship between these two approaches and between theory and research has not always been straightforward, the series does not privilege one above the other. In being committed to a plurality of approaches it assumes that different camps have something to tell each other. In this way, the *Handbooks* aspire to be relevant for all approaches to communication. The specific designation “communication science” for the *Handbooks* should be taken to indicate this commitment to plurality; like “the study of communication”, it merely designates the disciplined, methodologically informed, institutionalized study of (human) communication.

On an operational level, the series aims at meeting the needs of undergraduates, postgraduates, academics and researchers across the area of communication studies. Integrating knowledge of communication structures and processes, it is dedicated to cultural and epistemological diversity, covering work originating from around the globe and applying very different scholarly approaches. To this end, the series is divided into 6 sections: “Theories and Models of Communication”, “Messages, Codes and Channels”, “Mode of Address, Communicative Situations and Contexts”, “Methodologies”, “Application areas” and “Futures”. As readers will see, the first four sections are fixed; yet it is in the nature of our field that the “Application areas” will expand. It is inevitable that the futures for the field promise to be intriguing with their proximity to the key concerns of human existence on this planet (and even beyond), with the continuing prospect in communication sciences that that future is increasingly susceptible of prediction.

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Introduction

Louis de Saussure and Andrea Rocci

1 Verbal communication. An introduction

1 Verbal communication across two scientific worlds

Common sense tells us that a topic such as *verbal communication* should be a central concern both for the scientific study of *communication* and for the scientific study of *language*.

At a purely descriptive level, verbal communication is arguably the most pervasive form of communication in human societies. At least it is so if we look not only at the rare cases of 'purely verbal' communication events and processes (if they exist at all) but consider the huge gamut of *prevalently* verbal forms of communication and the even greater range of communication phenomena in which language can be shown to play a part either directly or indirectly.

It is a commonality among linguists – linguistics being after all the science of language – that one should distinguish between *language* itself, which is a device of some sort, with its own internal principles of organisation (grammar, lexicon, semantics ...) and *language use* which is the use of language in order to achieve goals, the most obvious of these being communication.

Most communication researchers thus have to deal with issues of *language use* in their work. The issue of language looms large on research methodology, as a large share of the classic methods in communication research – from content analysis to interviews and questionnaires, not to mention the obvious cases of rhetorical analysis and discourse analysis – is based on the linguistically encoded meanings of naturally occurring or elicited verbal productions as data and/or relies on the subjects' understanding of constructed verbal stimuli. Yet among the reasons that sustain a differentiation between the study of *language* and that of *language use* is that, contrary to what is sometimes believed, linguistic messages are not transparent. In other words, it is not enough to know some code, here the linguistic code, in order to understand a fully-fledged meaning. Inference plays a very central role, so that the study of the linguistic data has to be confronted with other, non-linguistic, data, when studying verbal communication.

At a theoretical, explanatory, level, it could be also argued that the use of *language* is also the most distinctive trait of *human communication* as opposed to *animal* or, generally, non-human communication phenomena, introducing an evolutionary perspective on language and human communication.

Moving to the disciplinary camp of linguistics, the idea that the scientific study of language has to do with explaining language as a tool for conveying meaning in verbal communication may seem almost a truism. In this perspective, linguistics

is primarily concerned with explaining how a complex signal (acoustic or graphic) is *mapped* onto a content or meaning, language being the interface. Straightforward as it may seem, this definition of the task of the discipline has not always been the one adopted by mainstream linguistics where, for a long time, other concerns have taken priority over explaining verbal communication: the structure of human language and its variation across idioms, their evolution through time in relation to more ancient tongues, the relation of languages with speakers' world-views, the naturality of language as an innate apparatus or its artificiality as a culture-specific construct, etc. Communication in an elaborated sense proper became a true concern for scholars in the language sciences only in the second half of the 20th century with the emergence of pragmatics.

It turns out, in fact, that neither on the side of communication research nor on the side of linguistics, things are so clear-cut, and on neither side is the centrality of verbal communication for the respective scientific endeavors considered an undisputed truism. This is somewhat surprising when keeping in mind that the usual purpose of language is to communicate and that communication among humans is typically achieved by means of language.

A volume on verbal communication within a Handbook of Communication Sciences could not be conceived without recognizing this counter-intuitive state of the art and without an ambition to contribute towards bridging some of the gaps left open by this intellectual background. More generally, it could not be designed without taking into account the complex disciplinary and interdisciplinary landscape that surrounds this very disputed topic. The landscape in question is indeed particularly complex, since language lies at the intersection of many disciplines (linguistics, communication sciences, philosophy, psychology, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, etc.) which themselves belong to various schools of thought that used to spread on both sides of the now fading dividing line between natural and social sciences.

Indeed, language and communication make up for a scientific object of study in some sense relating both to natural sciences (it is about how humans use their brains and their motor system to send structured signals and to interpret them, hence it is about cognitive psychology and neurology) and to the humanities (it is about how humans share thoughts, emotions and experiences that shape all aspects of life in society, from basic communicative and representational needs to subtle and elaborated artistic and technological achievements). Therefore it is of little surprise that the field is fiercely disputed by highly conflicting trends: naturalistic-cognitive and formal approaches, on one side, and psychosocial trends on the other.

2 Verbal communication within the discipline of ‘communication’

Introducing a chapter on the role of language in interpersonal communication, Scott Jacobs (1994: 119) gives a rather pessimistic assessment of the state of the relationship between communication and linguistics as disciplines:

Almost all cases of communication that interest communication researchers involve talk or writing in some way. Still, the effort to ground notions of ‘message meaning’ or ‘symbolic action’ in a detailed account of the organization of linguistic forms and functions has always seemed to be so technical and tedious a task that it has been generally bypassed in the process of building communication theory. Likewise, students of language have often been reluctant to integrate their theories of language structure with what is manifestly the paradigm function of language, that of communication. (Jacobs 1994: 119)

Despite its pervasiveness and the role it plays in defining human communication as a whole, *verbal communication* does not currently define one cohesive and distinct subfield within the discipline of communication.

As Tracy (2001: 72) observes, “[c]ommunication’s central way of dividing scholars is by contexts of focal interest (face-to-face, commonly called interpersonal communication, organizational communication, mass communication and rhetorical studies (study of public, civic life))”. Clearly, *verbal communication* does not fit in this kind of subdivision as it is clearly equally important for *each* of the above-mentioned contextual domains.

A look at subdivisions in academic societies confirms that the Communication community does not perceive *verbal communication* as one recognized subfield: in the USA the *International Communication Association* (ICA) does not have a ‘verbal communication’ division, and neither has the *National Communication Association* (NCA), although the latter does have a *non-verbal communication* division (which does not fit the contextual subdivisions either).

In contrast, both the NCA and the ICA have a *Language and Social Interaction* division. This label clearly identifies a research community where the use of *language* in communication plays indeed a central role. As we will see, this community represents an important link between the ‘communication’ discipline in North America and significant research strands in the language sciences, including pragmatics, conversation analysis and discourse analysis. The focus of the *Language and Social Interaction* community, however, is clearly narrower than the full extent of verbal communication phenomena. As the ICA website explains, the “primary focus” of this community “is in interpersonal and group settings, face-to-face or mediated by telephone and computer”. Discussing *discourse analysis* in the communication discipline in America, Tracy (2001: 726) observes that the use of discourse analytic methods began among *interpersonal communication* scholars and remains best established in that specific contextual area.

Looking closely at NCA's divisions we encounter a few other labels which, at least for historical reasons, are associated with the study of language in communication: *Argumentation and Forensics* and *Rhetorical and Communication Theory*. Their description, however, makes no specific mention of the study of discourse or speech.

In contrast with NCA and ICA, the *European Communication Research and Education Association* (ECREA) lacks a 'Language and Social Interaction' division or a 'Verbal Communication' one. In fact, even *rhetoric* and *argumentation* are absent from the labeling of its interests groups.

These absences may well be due to particular circumstances, but they surely seem to reflect certain fundamental differences between Europe and North America in the development in the field of communication. These fundamental differences touch also the way in which the field of communication treats *verbal communication* and relates (or fails to relate) to the language sciences proper.

Let us start from what could be, *prima facie*, a plausible label to denote the matter of the present book as a relevant subfield of Communication: *speech communication*.

In a North American context, the *speech* label refers more to an intellectual tradition within the communication discipline than to any topical subfield having to do with verbal communication. Historically, this "speech tradition" (Craig 1993) played a crucial role in the birth of the Communication discipline in the United States.

While mass communication scholars "often frame the birth of the field in the post-World War II era, with communication's turn to social science and the start of research institutes at several major universities" (Tracy 2001: 726), scholars in the "speech tradition" would rather trace back the field to earlier and somewhat humbler roots. In the early years of the 20th Century teachers of public speaking in American universities broke away from English departments and founded departments of Speech, later to become departments of Speech Communication. According to Craig (1993: 311–312), these departments were often characterized by a tension between scholars of the Humanities rooted in the classical rhetorical traditions and those scholars who saw Speech as a behavioral, social discipline. Two orientations can be distinguished among the latter: some scholars became increasingly aware of the kind of "communication research" that was being developed in the social sciences and re-oriented their interests in that direction to eventually merge with the social-scientific tradition of research on communication, others sought to develop a neo-Aristotelian enterprise a new rhetoric based on scientific principles, encompassing "all contemporary forms of human communication" (Ibid. 311). This neo-Aristotelian view of rhetoric did not last, as "rhetoricians" increasingly oriented themselves towards the humanities and towards the post-modernist wave that was sweeping them, while the communication scientists had fully joined the ranks of the social sciences.

As ‘speech communication’ broadened its scope well beyond its original concerns with public speaking pedagogy to encompass the full range of communication phenomena, the *speech* element was progressively dropped from the names of departments and scholarly associations. This trend of renaming from ‘speech communication’ to ‘communication’ is still ongoing as we write.

The institutionalization of the ‘communication’ field in Europe – which takes place several decades later than in the USA – presents however a rather different picture as regards the relationship of the new discipline with the study of language and discourse.

In contrast with the North American situation, in Europe rhetoric was, until recently, not perceived as a living scholarly and pedagogical discipline and the educational endeavor of public speaking instruction did not have the same importance. In some European countries, it is linguistics and semiotics, rather than rhetoric, that have had an impact on the development of the field, after they had become very strong disciplines under the influence of structuralism. Roland Barthes’ (1970) influential paper on “ancient rhetoric” is particularly illuminating on the different attitudes towards rhetoric in the USA and France. Barthes’ approach to the “ancient empire” of rhetoric is wholly archeological. For him rhetoric, as an *intellectual* endeavor is dead and not worth reviving even if its taxonomies can be still perceived as useful in “marginal fields of communication and signification” such as the study of visuals in advertising (Barthes 1970: 195). In practice, rhetoric survives in what Barthes calls the “degraded, diffused, unarticulated” Aristotelianism of capitalist “mass culture” and mass communication. If rhetoric deserves to be studied, it is merely as a *historical* subject – as history of rhetoric – to critically understand the roots of these phenomena with the help of newer sciences such as linguistics, semiotics, psycho-analysis and marxism (cf. Barthes 1970: 223).

One can obviously contrast Barthes’ assessment of the legacy of ancient rhetoric with that of Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) who saw their *New Rhetoric*, centered on the study of argumentation, as filling a gap left by logic as regards the understanding of the discursive means of proof used in the humanities, in law, philosophy as well as in public life. Nonetheless, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca and Barthes share an important presupposition: they both believed that, at the time of their writing, rhetoric as a discipline was dead.

Karen Tracy (2001: 727) comments on the fact that Teun van Dijk in his *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1985) mentions the classical rhetoricians as “the first discourse analysts”. From Tracy’s American perspective this assimilation of rhetoric and discourse analysis “generates confusion” as rhetoric is a “distinct academic specialization” tied to a more humanistic and literary style of inquiry and to “continental philosophy” rather than to social sciences such as linguistics. One can see, on the other hand, how this appropriation might have seemed unproblematic to a European linguist like van Dijk in the 1980s: there was no such a clearly distinct academic specialization in Europe at the time and, if rhetoric enjoys greater recog-

dition nowadays in Europe, it is often because linguists and discourse analysts have become its foremost practitioners. What is then the place of *verbal communication* in European communication sciences?¹

There is a great deal of variation across countries and schools that we cannot hope to account for here, but a closer look to the French situation can help to highlight phenomena that are found also in other countries. Krieg-Planque (2007: 104–105), reviewing the situation of French *Sciences de l'information et de la communication* observes that semioticians like Roland Barthes, Julien Greimas and linguists such as Oswald Ducrot played an active role in the institutionalization of communication studies in France; she also observes that communication textbooks routinely refer to linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson as founding figures of communication studies. These references are often formulaic – one example for all the omnipresent reference to Jakobson's schema of language functions – but witness of a certain permeability of communication sciences to ideas originating in linguistics and in particular in structural linguistics. Saussure is seen as a major figure also for the reason that he viewed language as ancillary to (social) psychology within 'semiology' (his semiotic theory). For Saussure, language is an autonomous system (later to be called a 'structure') of signs which in some sense shape the representations and thoughts of speakers; this structuralist conception lies at the core of Roman Jakobson's and Emile Benveniste's developments toward theorizing linguistic communication.

The current configuration of communication education in France, as Krieg-Planque (2007: 109–114) observes, features curricula that mix language sciences and communication sciences and includes a certain number of *discourse*-related or *semiotics*-related courses also in more standard communication curricula. The relationship of these courses with a broader, encompassing, approach to *verbal communication* is far from being straightforward, however. Krieg-Planque (2007: 117) observes that *discourse analysis* is seen foremostly as a *method* for analyzing messages and identifying underlying social representations rather than as an investigation having *discourse* as its object and that it sometimes loses its specific focus on linguistically informed meaning construction so that it can hardly be distinguished from "classic" mass communication research methods such as *content analysis*.

Although the view of discourse analysis as method is also typical of the American communication scene (Tracy 2001: 726), its confusion with quantitative methods of mass communication research is impossible in an American context. In that con-

¹ The shift in the denomination of the field is intentional. While in North America *Communication* is perceived as being *one* discipline and is usually not explicitly qualified as a *science* but rather listed among the arts, despite its strong social sciences component, in continental Europe the field is more often perceived as multi-disciplinary and its component disciplines are often qualified as *sciences*: hence *Communication Sciences*.

text, discourse analysis established itself as a method in the interpersonal communication area where its focus on naturally occurring talk in interaction contrasts with “the experimental methods and sophisticated statistical testing procedures” (Tracy 2001: 726) prevalent in that area. In contrast, French discourse analysis developed from the study of political discourse, newspaper discourse and media discourse in general and involved from the beginning computer supported methods for the quantitative analysis of extensive corpora (cf. Maingueneau and Angermüller 2007).

3 Linguistics and verbal communication

Some of these researchers in communication, especially in the USA, have grouped language and social interaction under the same banner. Within the language sciences, there was a time in which linguistics, in close alliance with semiotics, enjoyed wide currency within communication sciences, at least as far as Europe is concerned, and was regarded as a model for theorizing about communication. The contribution of linguistic ideas to the field of communication remained however largely programmatic. That period is long past and linguistics and semiotics have since then taken different paths (at least until very recently).

In the following decades, however, linguistics – or, more broadly, language sciences – has undergone a ‘pragmatic turn’ that put language use and communicative action, rather than system and structure, on the centre stage. It has entered a series of interdisciplinary partnerships that have made it much more relevantly connected with the study of communication, while suffering of a lack of visibility in the field of communication.

Two trends of research are particularly relevant here and have informed the architecture of the present volume. They are basically related to the two major trends we mentioned at the beginning of this introduction: research mostly oriented towards social aspects, and research mostly oriented towards cognitive aspects. Although currently the divide between these two trends tends to blur, at least for what concerns their central topics of interest, relevant oppositions in focus do exist at the epistemological level due to a preference for methods and concerns of the social sciences on one side and of the natural sciences on the other.

The trend that stems from the interaction of the Language Sciences and social sciences such as anthropology and sociology produced a plethora of approaches to the study of verbal meanings in socially situated communication events (discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, etc.). These approaches have already quietly entered the domain of ‘communication’, especially in relation to the issue of qualitative methodology in communication research. As noted above, especially in the USA, communication researchers in this area refer to the subfield as ‘Language

and Social Interaction'. In other academic traditions the contribution of socially oriented language research to the field of communication takes a variety of forms, which sometimes are simply ranged under the general label of 'applied linguistics'.

The other major trend, represented by cognitively oriented research on language and verbal communication, is mostly carried out within cognitive and experimental pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, in close connection with research in cognitive psychology, cognitive anthropology, artificial intelligence and cognitive science in general. This growing body of work addresses the cognitive processes underlying verbal communication seeking to factor out what is specific to strictly verbal aspects and dependent on a highly specialized language faculty, from what depends on more general cognitive processes, recruited in communication, that also underlie non-verbal behaviour. On the one hand this kind of research is deeply intertwined with evolutionary research on language and communication tackling the question of what is uniquely and distinctively *human* in human communication and by contrast what we share with other living beings. On the other hand, it provides insight into how language interacts with the reasoning processes involved in inference, argumentation and persuasion as well as with cognitive processes connected with framing, metaphorical mapping and analogy.

The field known as *Pragmatics*, with its emphasis on intentional communicative behaviour, contextual processes of explicit and implicit message understanding, shared intentions and action coordination, provides a bridge between the cognitive and the social strands of research. Cognitively oriented research on language use, although it is not systematically represented in the discipline of communication as an autonomous concern, is nevertheless relevant or even central to a variety of areas ranging from research about procedures of message understanding to persuasion research.

4 Rationale and contents

This volume takes into account this complex interdisciplinary background in a purposive way, selecting those issues and themes of research in verbal communication that are relevant not only for the established community of scholars in language sciences but more specifically for scholars in the broader area of communication. We draw from those research trends and contributions that best illuminate communication research and have a real potential for innovation, irrespective of their scientific community of origin: communication sciences, linguistics and the language sciences, psychology, sociology/anthropology, philosophy or other disciplines within the humanities and social sciences.

As expected from our understanding of the scientific landscape, we took seriously the double focus on cognitive and socio-cultural aspects in current research on language. As much as possible, we chose to see it in terms of a potential enrich-

ing complementarity rather than as a sterile divide, although acknowledging that on some issues the epistemological tension remains. Among the critical themes that a volume on language within communication sciences has to address, there are the few big issues of what language is, how studying it contributes crucially to the understanding of human communication in general, and what it tells us at a more philosophical and anthropological level about human nature. It is also important to consider how language concerns intersect communication research at the level of methodology for the analysis of verbal data of different kinds. The fact that communication scholars are interested in the meanings or ‘contents’ *manifestly* and *latently* associated with the verbal data they manipulate is an example of this intersection: this idea has been extensively studied by linguistics and pragmatics under different names (said vs. ‘meant’; ‘truth-conditional’ vs. non truth-conditional; sentence meaning vs. speaker meaning; explicit vs. implicit) with a detailed look at *how* the meanings are constructed and communicated across a variety of contexts and media. As it appears, verbal communication research (pragmatics) is typically relevant to broader issues of communication sciences; its applicability to the analysis of communication in various social contexts is always in focus throughout the volume.

The book follows these principles along six (uneven) sections: *Verbal communication: fundamentals*; *Explicit and implicit verbal communication*; *Conversation and dialogue*; *Types of discursive activities*; *Verbal communication across media and contexts*; *Verbal communication quality*.

The first section of the handbook (Verbal communication: Fundamentals) is devoted to liminal matters that are actually crucial to acquire a grasp of the specificity of verbal communication and at the same time appreciate its pivotal nature in the human communication landscape at large. Jointly, the two chapters that compose this section respond to the need of dispelling a double misperception of verbal communication phenomena.

On the one hand, the verbal component in communication has often been seen as the default form of human communication. It is the one that is often implied when theorizing about human communication in general and with some triviality. As such it has tended to be pushed in the background of communication scholars’ interests, as if a specific attention to its dynamics was not crucial, thus losing perspective on the unicity, ‘species specific’ endowment that the faculty of *language* represents and how it deeply affected the distinctive and fascinating efficacy of human communication as a whole. The question of the uniqueness of human verbal communication and of the role of language in what makes us humans requires us to take a closer look at the very emergence of language in light of Evolution. Gloria Origgi’s chapter reviews the recent history of the research on this topic in light of multidisciplinary discoveries in the recent decades. She provides a glimpse into the relation between language and human communication ability stressing the importance of considering it in the light of the co-evolution of language and of

the human capacity for meta-representation, which represents a crucial game changer as regards the general – verbal and non-verbal – communicative abilities of the human species.

On the other hand, when the attention is brought on means of human communication where the language faculty does not play a role (at least, not a directly observable one), the importance of these non-verbal means in our lives and their effectiveness for persuasion, for the maintenance of interpersonal relationships, or for other socially relevant purposes is emphasized at the expense of words, language or verbal communication. This attitude, enshrined by the saying *a picture is worth a thousand words*, appears to be endemic to the media, popular science, self-development literature and consulting on communication skills for professionals. Nickolaus Jakob, Thomas Roessing and Thomas Petersen observe in their review on the effects of verbal and non-verbal elements in communication that this attitude surfaces with a certain regularity also in serious communication research with even some gross misrepresentations of findings. This phenomenon is interesting because it manifests an underlying view of human communication where verbal and non-verbal semiotic modes are pitted against each other while no emphasis is put on the effects resulting from the integration of these different modes of communication, tackled by the burgeoning research on *multimodality* reported in section V of this handbook – where it is shown how the use of language in conversational interaction as well as in written documents lives in a close complementary relation with other semiotic modes less directly shaped by the human language faculty.

The second section, Explicit and implicit verbal communication, offers an overview of the various aspects of meaning that language carries. The array of messages passed by means of verbal communication, i.e. through utterances and speech events, is layered in a number of types of meanings bearing various properties. Andrea Rocci and Margherita Luciani's chapter present an overview of the interaction between semantics, i.e. the study of language as a code paired with abstract meanings, and verbal communication as being the use of language as oriented towards meaningful and performative ends. Their paper first considers how schematic linguistic meanings guide, via processes of contextual saturation, the construction of the *predicate-argument structures* that make up the fundamental bricks of meaning to move then to the stratification of predicate meanings in terms of *semantic entailments*, which correspond to the potentially asserted and focused content and *presuppositions*, which correspond to information that the meaningful use of a predicate takes for granted and the addressee is prompted to recover in the informational context of the utterance. Finally, examining the relationship between presuppositions and the argument frame of a predicate the authors are brought to consider how the use of a predicate necessarily presupposes a broader *semantic frame* through which the situation is modeled. Semantics is thus shown to be a primary resource for the kind of *frame analysis* that has been often advocated in communication research to understand selection and salience in the medias as

well as in other communication arenas. Among the things that fall into the category of *meanings* lie not only factual pieces of information but also various sorts of subjective meanings. One such type of subjective meaning has to do with presenting evaluations (evaluative meanings). In his chapter, Peter White considers work undertaken within several trends in language sciences and makes special reference to recent developments in the field of ‘sentiment analysis’ in computational linguistics. He explores evaluative meaning under two broad headings: 1. attitudinal evaluations by which positive or negative assessments are conveyed and 2. evaluative positionings by which propositions are construed as more or less reliable, contentious or agreed upon. The chapter looks at the tools and theories on offer to account for such aspects of language.

The chapter by Victoria Escandell-Vidal is dedicated to one of the main puzzles that 20th century linguistics and philosophy have attempted and largely managed to solve: implicit meanings. Such meanings are so pervasive in communication that they may be a key to what language is all about: a simplified code making use of elaborated cognitive abilities. The chapter reviews the ways the scholarly literature proposes to handle them in relation with both language itself and inferential, non specific, processing; two major trends are considered, one oriented towards the idea that implicit communication is largely a social issue relying on shared norms of cooperative verbal behaviour, the other suggesting that implicit meaning is a matter of natural cognitive routines oriented towards an increased efficiency of communication. Catherine Davies and Napoleon Katsos address more specifically the notion of *informativeness* by exploring the behaviour of ‘referential’ expressions, that is, expressions that allow for uniquely identifying properties and entities in the world. Their chapter explores in particular the cases where speakers tend to overspecify the referential target and examines various reasons why a speaker should do so. Considering the way overspecifying referents modifies the context of interpretation, and considering experimental evidence, Davies and Katsos show that the way we refer to things in the world is not without significance at both the social and the cognitive levels. Referential meaning, which is a central concern of many scholars within philosophy of language and linguistics, is a type of meaning which is primitive in some sense: it is mostly about identifying, not predicating.

At the other end of meaning, so to speak, lies the most sophisticated types of language use: metaphor and figurative meaning in general. Marcelo Danesi in his chapter on metaphor and figurative meaning in verbal communication gives an extensive overview of how these creative and subtle ways of using language have been explained, starting from the classical assumptions of ancient rhetoric. A well-known fact since the famous work by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is that if poetic effects are not the most common things in language use, some types of metaphor (‘conceptual’ metaphors) and non-literal meanings are indeed very common (even though it is not always very clear that metaphors which have been lexicalized, that

is, which have integrated the language in full, are still truly metaphors in the full sense or not). Danesi lists the most common figures of speech in the sense of classical rhetoric and argues that the classical typologies remain helpful when considering the functions of these figures in relation to persuasion. The chapter provides a number of illustrations of why figurative language is rooted in figurative thinking (cognition) which enables us to make sense of the world around us, and constitutes at the same time a powerful device in communication because it relies on known concepts to evoke new and unknown realities.

The following section focuses on dialogue, interaction and mutual understanding and hosts two chapters, one dedicated to verbal interaction and the other on dialogue and mutual understanding. In the first chapter, Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni reviews how the interface between language and social behaviour has been envisaged in the broad domain of conversation analysis from the ritual constraints identified by Goffman to the elaboration of social relationships achieved through linguistic means *inter alia*; she connects the research on conversation with the study of cognitive pragmatic understanding. Ivana Markova's chapter, addressing the fact that speeches and 'discourses' are interconnected in some way, exposes the polyphonic conception first offered by Bakhtin and Voloshinov according to which speech is inherently dialogic. This view, more common in literary studies than in linguistics, points to a fundamental intuition on human verbal behaviour, which is that people speak to integrate a flow of information and arguments that surround them in everyday life. This notion of *dialogism* is explained in its historical and philosophical background and linked to considerations related to ethics and psychology: trust and search for social recognition being two important drives for engaging in a verbal activity and achieving a sort of 'mutual understanding'.

Verbal activities are indeed numerous and can be classified according to various criteria. We use language to provide narrations, to win arguments, we write or speak language, and for so doing we make use of several possible kinds of language or *discourse genres* and we integrate language with other communicative and behavioral resources and modalities. An important section dedicated to *types of discursive activities* encompasses chapters about all these aspects of verbal communication. First, Jean-Louis Dessalles elaborates on the conversational behaviour of humans from an evolutionary perspective. In his chapter on narration and reasoning, he explains that human conversation has a particular structure that bears no resemblance with any other known communication system, whereby people's spontaneous speech comes in two forms: narratives and argumentative reasoning. He further argues that this characteristic conversational structure is not fortuitous: conversation being a costly behaviour, if only because of the time and energy it demands, it has to be linked with biological functions such as showing off (hence attracting new friends) and other social network related purposes. Narration is integrated in this picture as a means of handling the unexpected. In resonance with these points, Neal Norrick, in the following chapter, elaborates on narrative dis-

course in its detailed cognitive and social dimensions. Narration is about social goals like breaking the ice and identifying group values through story telling, and relies on cognitive abilities linked to rationality and memory. On the side of argumentation, the chapter by Frans van Eemeren and Corina Andone is dedicated to the study of argumentation as an interactional and communicative activity involving commitments and an appeal to critical standards of rationality. The chapter shows how a linguistic and pragmatic approach of argumentation, pragma-dialectics, revived the tradition of rhetoric, pushing the issue of argumentation towards the contemporary interdisciplinary setting where the topic of verbal communication lies. The chapter involves a comprehensive description of the scientific landscape surrounding the study of argumentation, notably within dialogues.

The contribution by Carolyn Miller and Ashley Kelly addresses a notion which has already puzzled linguists, scholars in literature, psychologists and sociologists for decades: the notion of *discourse genres*. They take it as an idea which “marks large-scale repeated patterns in human symbolic production and interaction, patterns that are taken to be meaningful” in a wide sense. Genres map onto types of social and cognitive activities in verbal communication and are tied to social needs; as such they involve many research questions across disciplines and objects of study, from linguistics to social science, from literature to Internet blogging, raising stimulating theoretical and methodological issues for communication sciences, in particular if a genre is in the end best defined by, as they put it, the expectations and motivations of its users.

Another dimension of the activities involved in verbal communication relates to the primary medium used (oral or written speech, images, combinations of modalities). Often left aside by scholars in the language sciences as bearing little or no influence on what language is and what it is used for, it is however of real importance in the broader picture of communication to study not only multimodality in communication but also the primary medium used – i.e. writing. That medium is not, actually, without influence on a variety of cultural and anthropological facts, literacy among others (skills discussed by Mary Jo Reiff in a later chapter), but also for the understanding of human communication and its underlying principles. Trivially, oral cultures are different in various respects from written cultures, and the main difference obviously lies in the fact that writing is probably the most powerful technology ever invented by humans, allowing for a different way of handling human activities, their procedures and overall social organisation with a notion of permanence. The way the writing codes are variously elaborated across languages and cultures is not without far reaching implications in areas such as visual recognition and simply language in general, which Terry Joyce addresses by means of an elaborated typology. Doing so, he highlights the relationship between graphic systems of language with phonetics, morphology and (consequently) meaning; but this also allows him to raise hypotheses about the underlying principles that preside to the elaboration of visual linguistic coding systems. John Bate-

man draws in the following chapter a large picture of the integration of various modalities of communication. He reviews the main trends that have addressed multimodal communication, with some focus on the combination of written language with images, and explores the many methodological questions raised by the phenomenon on multimodality such as the nature of the analytic units to study, the underlying assumptions about discourse and cognition that can be applied to the question of multimodality (for example assumptions about coherence, relevance and visual processing of information more generally, and of course also with a special attention to social contexts). The section ends with a chapter that goes further in the topic of multimodality by dwelling into the embodied resources of human communication that accompany speech during face-to-face interactions, in particular gestures. Lorenza Mondada details within an ethnomethodological perspective how the integration of gestures (typically pointing gestures, but others as well) participate to the making-up of a conversation as a complex architected social elaboration following the tradition initiated by prior conversation analysts such as Schegloff. She pays particular attention to the management of spatiality, but addresses a whole range of issues that show how bodily events surrounding verbal communication contribute not only to meaning but to the establishment of the specific social relations that occur and are constructed during conversations.

The section dedicated to *verbal communication across media and contexts* is a continuation of what precedes and as it gathers chapters that deal with the issue of contexts, which vary and have various social and institutional aims. Daniel Perin focuses on newswriting and starts with a case study before opening towards theoretical concerns regarding the cognition of media discourse and its social aspects, including language policing, audience design and a variety of features on which he sheds light by means of metadiscourse analysis. He advocates a type of approach which relies on specific tools according depending on the level that is being tackled. Mark Aakhus and Stephen DiDomenico turn to language and interaction in new-media environments. Such settings enable us to communicate electronically across time and space without co-presence or where co-presence is even impossible, although still in various ways this mode of communication mimics face-to-face interaction in some sense. Even more so: the authors in fact argue that new media do not fundamentally change the way we communicate with language but rather modify aspects of the practices involved. More precisely, they suggest that these uses of language are adaptations of communication principles to new settings materialized through technological means. In that sense, new media are better viewed, they suggest, as technologies for communication that are extensions of human creativity in that they exploit the overarching principles managing language use and social interaction; such a view, they suggest, opens the landscape of a 'pragmatic web' where the technology is fully part of the background in which speakers deploy their communicative abilities.

Verbal communication, as the next chapter by François Coreen shows, is more than a key element in organisational contexts: it is the crucial place where their

social construction is achieved. His chapter reviews the history of thought on the topic of organisational communication through the major schools that have addressed it and proposes a view according to which the various devices at play in discourse within organisational settings contribute to establish shared values and commitment to hierarchy and other organisational dimensions.

Translation is one of the major areas where research on language has been flourishing for at least three decades and which is of central importance to verbal communication across languages and cultures. The chapter by Stefano Arduini explains that the role of the translator shifted from instrumental to co-creative in the process of achieving a translated material; thus it incorporates a notion of the translator's own subjectivity as an individual and at the same time involves a particular status in shaping the cultural world. Translation has undergone major evolutions in the recent decades with the arrival of new technologies but, as Arduini argues, translation remains – and gains in being viewed as – an experience that transforms the translator's environment, for example by highlighting certain values or aspects of the original text. Raphael Berthele's chapter also addresses problems that concern communication across languages: *multilingual communication*, that is communication that makes use of more than one language. As he shows, this type of communication deploys itself in specific regimes where the respective share of the various languages vary. Berthele develops the major cognitive aspects of multilingual communication across three main problems: its consequences (i) for the individual's own usage of language, (ii) for languages "in the sense of emerging collective usage patterns" and (iii) on cognition in the wider sense, not restricted to the cognition of language proper. Expectedly, this chapter touches major issues not only in acquisition and language learning but also in philosophy of language and communication. In particular, multilingualism helps us understand the relation between language, thought and culture (linguistic relativity), as it has only a selective impact on it. A section is dedicated to English as a *lingua franca*. Crosslinguistic inquiry always trigger the need for a closer attention to the relation between language and culture; this is certainly the case with translation studies and even more so with the study of multilingual communication. Anna Wierzbicka dedicates a chapter specifically to this very broad, stimulating and fundamental question that is always standing somewhere in the background of work on verbal communication and which is as much about philosophy of concepts, ethnology and anthropology as it is about linguistics and verbal communication. In her chapter, she carefully delineates what in language is culture-specific and what is not (and thus is universal). She explains with sound examples and in details how two levels of language (universal and culture-specific) are identifiable. Throughout the chapter, she shows how linguistic variation and non-variation has to be carefully balanced, far from ideologies that either challenge the existence of universals in the human language vocabularies and concepts or take intuitively some concepts to be universal by speculation without looking at actual linguistic data.

The following section is dedicated to a notion that scholars within language sciences will not find necessarily familiar but that scholars in Communication sciences and other domains are interested in in a crucial way: *quality*. This divide is understandable since linguists will not think of differences of quality when studying language, but other scholars interested in communication will on the contrary think of quality as a major issue. Linguists tend to consider all languages as basically equivalent, either because they think that they share a common fundamental structure *à la* Chomsky or because they consider that linguistic diversity is basically neutral in terms of richness – an idea already held by Frans Boas and the Whorfian tradition. Even the linguists interested in pragmatics will also mostly refrain from talking about quality, since what might happen in specific conversations in terms of quality will not be felt as being a question that regards the overarching principles of conversation in which they are primarily interested. Nonetheless, a notion such as quality has direct connections with at least three concerns of language sciences: misunderstandings, deception with language, and communication in institutions where some warrants of efficacy are necessary and where relations of dominance are established.

It is a truism that verbal communication leads occasionally to ambiguities and errors which are not merely what linguists call ‘errors of performance’ or slips-of-the-tongue, but that are consequences of how communication works in a wider sense. Nicholas Allott’s chapter is dedicated to the various types of misunderstandings that occur in verbal communication according to their cause, emphasizing the intrinsic risk of all communicative actions and in particular of verbal communication: the economy of language which codes little but asks much in terms of inferential processing and grasping of contextual assumptions makes of language a highly efficient, quick and frugal way of giving public manifestness to private thinking. But as a trade-off, it is not 100 % reliable. Total failure is relatively rare but approximations and ambiguities often lead to local problems where asking for precisions or confirmations become necessary, in particular when competing contextual pieces of information might lead to different inferences or more simply when the linguistic meaning needs to be specified *ad hoc* and such precision is not salient enough from the context. In such cases, one might say that the speaker has misrepresented what the hearer either expects, is able to grasp from the background or to select as relevant in the context, or about the speaker’s intentions, all sorts of processes that indicate deeper cognitive roots in mutual understanding and misunderstanding. Such cognitive roots are taken into account by Steve Oswald, Didier Maillat and Louis de Saussure who address in the next chapter the notion of deception and uncooperativeness in language. Their chapter reviews the main trends of research on this topic and shows how the rhetoric tradition, which lists and explains logical and more recently informal-pragmatic ‘fallacies’, can be considered with regard to the import of cognitive psychology and in particular within the tradition initiated by Tversky and Kahneman where systematic biases are identified in

cognition; the chapter explains that contemporary cognitive theories are being brought in the picture of malevolent communication in order to explain how fallacious arguments can come to be efficient in real life.

Geert Jacobs, in the next chapter, shows how quality of communication is central to the life of institutions and how complex it is to find the right method of evaluation, from text-focused methods (using general principles) to expert-focused strategies (as it stands for example when evaluating articles submitted to scientific journals) and to reader-focused strategies (where panels of readers are selected to represent the target audience and intuitively grade the quality). Yet within institutional contexts, as Jacobs explains, there is a major bias which constantly upsets the quality of communication and its evaluation: “since most of this is a non-colaborative negotiation, a struggle for power, quality becomes a multi-faceted, ambivalent notion” which in the end touches to the aspects of communication evoked in the preceding chapter: non cooperative communication, a domain in which the quality is, from the beginning, a problem virtually impossible to tackle successfully.

The volume ends with two chapters dedicated to skills. John Green, addressing oral communicative skills, recalls how much the issue is a matter of concern since at least Antiquity in Egypt and Greece where treaties existed on techniques of persuasion among which oral skills in the sense of eloquence and winning arguments. He focuses on adult proficiency and explains in the chapter why oral skills do indeed matter, in relation to their various functions in communication, and that deficits in these skills, which are observed between individuals, have specific sources and that proficiency can be improved notably through conscious and monitored practices. Mary Jo Reiff considers in her chapter on written communication skills that these skills are connected to rhetorical genres and to the ability or capacity to manage them appropriately for the envisaged ends. Her chapter presents the state of the art of the research on writing skills and looks at the cognitive and social dimensions they involve; particular attention is paid to social contexts and the social factors that influence writing practices, typically in the workplace, with an eye to the ideologies that get involved in these practices (for example, she relates a case study that showed how letter writers in insurance companies tend to adapt their practices to their position of power, making use of the classical strategies identified by Critical Discourse Analysis in order to maintain that position. The chapter also elaborates considerations on written communication skills improvement and teaching.

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I. Verbal communication: Fundamentals

Gloria Origgi

2 The origins of human verbal communication

Abstract: This chapter reconstructs that debate around the origins of language focusing in particular on the evolution of verbal communication. The main theories on evolution of language are succinctly presented. The origin of language remain thus a partial mystery: a lucky combination of the evolution of a super-complex modular cognition and of biological characteristics, such as the vocal tract, the larynx and the auditory system that optimized mutual comprehension in our ancestors. The chapter present the central tenet of the debate around Chomsky, Hauser and Fitch's seminal paper on the evolution of language, that is, to establish whether the key-feature of a language faculty is the universal grammar with its recursive properties, as Chomsky, Hauser and Fitch affirm, or a symbolic competence, that is, the exquisitely human capacity to associate arbitrary signs to referents and intentionally point to the signs to "mean" something, as Tomasello and many others suggest. An analysis of the evolution of the pragmatic dimension of language, so central to verbal communication, concludes the chapter.

Keywords: language instinct, mental organ, evolution of recursive capacities, universal grammar, theory of mind, evolution of pragmatics

1 The 'taboo' on the origins of language

In 1866 the Linguistic Society in Paris officially banned research on the origins of language. In the article 2 of its legal chart of statutes and regulations it was stated: "*The society doesn't accept communications concerning either the origins of language or the creation of a universal language*".¹ The ban was due to various reasons, also ideological ones against positivist thinking and biological approaches to languages that were considered ill founded in general. Whatever the reasons were, the idea of something wrong with the general project of inquiring about the origins of language lasted for more than a century. The most intuitive obstacle to such a research project was of course finding *evidence*: speech is volatile, *verba volant*, and doesn't leave traces on objects and artifacts. Also, the "organs" or speech, like the vocal cords, the larynx etc, aren't so easy to date and to correlate with a full-

¹ Cf. The original version in French states: "*La société n'admet aucune communication concernant, soit l'origine du langage, soit la creation d'une langue universelle*".

fledged linguistic ability. By comparing the vocal tract of newborns, apes and human fossils, Philip Lieberman (1975, 2002) was able to date back the emergence of an adapted vocal tract for speech around 70,000 years ago, but if the presence of such a vocal tract is a necessary condition for speech, it is not sufficient: many other competences should be at work in order to ascribe a linguistic competence. And the particular shape of human vocal tract is one of the most common causes of death in children. Thus, if it was a mutation and occurred in pre-linguistic hominids, it is difficult to imagine to what extent it could have provided any fitness to its bearers.

In the seventies and eighties, many distinguished linguists and biologists argued against the possibility of explaining language through natural selection. For example, Noam Chomsky (1972) and Stephen J. Gould (1987) gave strong arguments on why a biological specification for grammar could not be the product of natural selection: it doesn't show genetic variations, it cannot come in intermediate forms and it doesn't confer any selective advantage. Also, it is a too complex and unique ability to be attributed to natural selection, that is, there is nothing to compare with. Chomsky's skepticism in his 1972 book was well expressed by these following statements:

It is perfectly safe to attribute this development (*of an innate language faculty*) to "natural selection" so long as we realize that there is no substance to this assertion, that it amounts to nothing more than a belief that there is some naturalistic explanation for these phenomena. (Chomsky 1972: 97)

or:

(*A language faculty*) poses a problem for the biologist, since, if true, it is an example of true "emergence" – the appearance of a qualitatively different phenomena at a specific level of complexity of organization. (Chomsky 1972: 70)

According to them, language may have evolved as a by-product of selection of other abilities or just as a by-product of an increase of brain size. Similar points have been made by Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini (1989), David Premack (1986) and Jacques Mehler (1985).

In 1990, the two psycholinguists Steven Pinker and Paul Bloom, both raised in the Chomskian linguistic paradigm, argued that, given that language has to be considered for many reasons more as a biological organ than a cultural artifact, its peculiarity and unique design should be explained as the product of natural selection "as it is understood within the orthodox theory of synthetic or neo-Darwinian theory of language evolution (Mayr 1982)" (Pinker & Bloom 1992: 452). Most of the arguments presented in their papers on the subject are based on analogy with other complex abilities such as *echolocation*, that is, the capacity of certain animals like bats to orient themselves through sounds, or *stereopsis*, that is, the perception of depth. They are unique capacities, qualitatively different from any antecedent.

They are highly specific and impressively complex biological organs, and have undoubtedly evolved through selective pressure. As the anatomical structure of complex systems such as echolocation or vision show signs of design for some function, according to Pinker and Bloom, the cognitive mechanisms underlying language show the same signs of design for function. Language is a complex of many cognitive mechanisms, each designed to mapping a syntactic, semantic or pragmatic function. The building blocks of grammar are universal and are built around basic lexical categories, such as *nouns*, *verbs*, *adjectives* and *propositions*. Many syntactic constraints and devices, such as the rules of phrase structure, the linear order, etc., allow to maximize the expressive power of language and to reduce the memory load in speech comprehension. The rules of phonological segmentation and prosody rhythm also suggest a system that is maximized for oral comprehension and articulation. The two authors claim that, given the highly specialized function of the language system, it is not just telling a story to argue that it may have been the product of natural selection.

A challenge to their view comes from the variety of languages. If there are cognitive devices that have been selected to govern word order or other grammatical functions, how is such a diversity of languages possible? If the cognitive devices that underlie our linguistic abilities have to allow the realization of very different grammatical forms, it means that they are general-purpose systems and can have evolved for other reasons than for a specific linguistic function. Yet, according to the authors, the variations are at the level of the *external language*, whereas the selective hypothesis concerns the *internal language*, or *language faculty*, that is, the abstract system of rules posited by Chomsky and common to the development of any language. In Chomskyan linguistics, there is a universal grammar that has a set of parameters that gives rise to different linguistic forms. But, essentially, the language faculty is the same for everyone. According to the “principles and parameters” hypothesis on universal grammar put forward by Chomsky in the 80s, the language faculty is a set of modular devices that can be “switched on and off” according to the public linguistic input each learner of language receives.

Although Pinker and Bloom 1990 article was very influential, it provided only indirect arguments for the evolution of language, mainly based on analogies with the evolution of other biological systems. Yet, the paper reflected the *air du temps*, and a second version of it appeared in the collective volume edited by Barkov, Cosmides and Tooby in 1992: *The Adapted Mind*². The book was the first of a long series on the role of evolutionary explanations of complex human cognitive functions and social abilities. It rehabilitated evolution as a relevant dimension for the comprehension of the human mind and inaugurated an intellectual season of debates around the selective pressures that may have played a role in shaping the modular information-processing mechanisms that make our cognition so unique.

² Cf. J. Barkov, L. Cosmides, J. Tooby (1992).

Given the scarcity of pre-historical evidence about our ancestral thoughts and words, the evolutionary approach to cognition was mainly based on a “reverse engineering” approach under the hypothesis that all evolved psychological mechanisms are adaptations in response to the demands of a “hunters-gatherers” way of life. Our ancestral mind is thus that of hunters and gatherers evolved through the Pleistocene, that is, the geological epoch that lasted from about more than two millions years ago to 11,700 years ago. The evolutionary psychological approach states that we can infer a modular, domain-specific psychological mechanism from an adaptive problem and vice versa: we can infer an adaptive problem from a modular, domain-specific psychological mechanism. Again, given the poor evidence about Pleistocene minds, the second direction of the inference (from the psychological mechanism to the adaptive problem) is the most used in this literature.

Even if many authors condemned the approach as a generator of *Just So Stories* (Fodor 2007; Fodor and Piattelli-Palmarini 2010), evolutionary thinking about language was definitely rehabilitated in the 1990s, and brought a fresh, interdisciplinary air among linguistics, cognitive science, anthropology and evolutionary biology by opening a new research trend in cognitive and social sciences that may be considered mainstream nowadays. The doubts that were casted on the very possibility of understanding language in terms of natural selection faded away progressively and today the evolution of language has become a central topic of contemporary linguistics and cognitive science.

The best evidence of this conceptual change is a 2002 paper co-signed by Noam Chomsky³ and published in *Science* with the title: “The Faculty of Language. What Is It, Who Has it and How Did It Evolve?” That Chomsky, that is, one of the most convinced adversaries of the evolutionary approaches to language, decided to be involved in this debate was the sign of a profound cultural transformation in linguistics that was paving the way for a new paradigm of research.

2 What did evolve?

It is clear that the new start for the debate on the evolution of language is related to the new paradigm in linguistics that owes its major developments to Noam Chomsky. That is because the hypothesis of an adaptive function of language is related to the view of language as a “mental organ”, a set of functionally specific cognitive modules that can have emerged through selective pressure. Positing an I-language (*internal language*) is thus a key element of an evolutionary approach to language. Yet, many questions are left open by this approach. First of all, what exactly did evolve and for what purposes? An I-language with a sophisticated set

³ Cf. M. Hauser, N. Chomsky, T. Fitch (2002).

of grammatical rules as the one posited by Chomsky is clearly species-specific and doesn't resemble to any other communicative systems in animals. How then language evolved from other adaptations, if we don't have any other system to compare with? Which cognitive systems does human language share with other communicative systems present in nature? Second, is the evolution of language the product of a gradual transformation throughout a continuum, as many authors suggest,⁴ or is it a discontinuous, 'saltational'⁵ process that doesn't have antecedents? And third, which purpose did language evolve for? Is the language faculty an adaptation for communication or for something else? These questions are highly problematic and open many directions of research, such as the comparative study of linguistic capacities and communicative capacities. Given that the evolution of language involves at least three different functional components – the sensory-motor, the conceptual-intentional and the more specific computational component that assures linguistic computations – we may ask the three questions on the evolution of linguistic abilities separately for each component.

As for the first component, many authors think that language evolved as an interface between the conceptual system and the sensorimotor one, allowing a better coordination between the two and a more sophisticated response of the organism. For example, Gardenförs and Osvath⁶ argue that language as a symbolic interface system may have evolved so differently in humans in order to assure *prospective cognition*, that is, the capacity to plan and represent events that are not immediately present. This anticipatory ability is typically human and can be related to the unique presence of language and its role in sensory-motor cognition.

Other authors⁷ argue that the symbolic capacity of humans is the central feature of language role in the evolution of our sensorimotor abilities. The fact that we can refer to aspects of the world through symbols and representations gave us a better representation of the environment and a better capacity to manipulate it. Derek Bickerton argues that language has evolved from forms of *proto-language*, that is, simpler representational systems that have semantic/referential properties and a very poor combinatory structure.⁸

Another hypothesis on the evolution of the sensorimotor component of language argue that language must have preceded speech, because many structural features of communication were already present in gestural communication. Both humans and great apes have been shown to have mirror neurons that connect manual and oral gestures. According to Corballis⁹, language is a sort of "swal-

⁴ Cf. D. Bickerton (1981); J. Hurford (2012).

⁵ In evolutionary theory, a *saltation*, also known as *abrupt speciation*, is a discontinuous change in a lineage provoked by a mutation that gives rise to a new species.

⁶ Cf. P. Gardenförs, M. Osvath (2005).

⁷ Cf. D. Bickerton (1981); T. Deacon (1997).

⁸ Cf. D. Bickerton (1981, 2000).

⁹ Cf. M. Corballis (2010).

lowed” gestural communication and shares many structural features with the sensorimotor components of gestural communication.

Many authors associated the evolution of language to that of cognitive capacities such as theory of mind (Origgi & Sperber 2000; Dunbar 2000), consciousness (Carruthers 2000) and rationality (Papineau 2000).¹⁰

Perhaps, the most challenging hypothesis on the evolution of language that was able to account for its high specificity and for its computational power is that put forward in the paper published on *Science* in 2002 by Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch, centered on the idea that a capacity for recursive thinking is at the core of language evolution.

3 Computational mechanisms for recursion as the core feature of the faculty of language: the Hauser-Chomsky-Fitch hypothesis

Humans not only talk: they also count, make complex inferences and are able to manipulate symbolic systems with endless possible combinations. This special computational power of our mind is based on *recursion*. According to Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch (from now on: HCF), it is the most distinctive trait of human cognition. Recursion is the computational property that “takes a finite set of elements and yields a potentially infinite array of discrete expressions” (HCF 2010: 18). *Discrete infinity* is a property of some computational systems, such as natural numbers, and, of course, of the human language. This trait is truly distinctive and cannot be backed up in animal capacities for manipulating symbols, or animal communicative systems, such as bee dances, bird sings etc.

HCF distinguish between a broad language faculty (FLB) and a narrow one (FLN) claiming that only the FLN is uniquely human. Although they commit to an adaptationist explanation of human cognition, FLN, which includes at least recursion, could have been evolved according to them as a *sprandel*, that is, a by-product of preexisting constraints. FLN may be an adaptive computation, given that it allows to communicate an endless variety of thoughts. Nevertheless, FLN can be adaptive without being a specific adaptation for language.

The originality of HCF hypothesis is that the focus of the uniqueness of language is not on the special features of speech. To the eyes of a Martian, what seems to distinguish humans from the rest of animal kingdom is the capacity of *verbal* communication, that is, of articulated speech. Yet, to what extent speech is so special of humans? Although many authors have argued for the uniqueness of the

¹⁰ Cf. P. Carruthers, A. Chamberlain (eds.) (2000).

human apparatus evolved as an adaptation to produce speech¹¹, comparative work on speech abilities has shown that the “organs of speech” are not so specialized for humans: other species show descended larynx, the ability to discriminate among different phonemes and to produce formants in their own species-typical vocalizations¹². Hence, the organs of speech don’t seem to be what makes the extraordinary difference of human languages compared to other animal communication systems.

On the contrary, the capacity for recursion, that is, for combining a set of finite symbols to generate infinite strings, is unique of our species. There must be constraints, such as a universal grammar, on our learning in order to explain how, from a finite array of linguistic data to which we are exposed, we are able to extrapolate a potentially infinite language. What makes us humans is the “ability to acquire the unlimited class of generative systems that includes all natural languages”.¹³

Although there exist interesting results on the capacity of other animals to count and learn numbers,¹⁴ it is clear however that what they lack is the capacity to create open-ended generative systems.

The puzzle remains whether recursion was evolved for language or not. According to HCF, it is highly doubtful that recursion was an adaptation for language. It is more plausible that it was a cognitive adaptation for other cognitive tasks and, by interacting with proto-systems of human communication, opened the possibility to construct natural languages. It is also possible that animals have recursion for domain specific abilities, such as navigation. In this case, what would be special about humans is that the recursive capacity is domain-general instead of domain specific, and can be applied to a variety of class of cognitive tasks.

4 Chomsky and his critics: the UG hypothesis under scrutiny

Many contributors to the ongoing debate on the evolution of language reject the central idea put forward by HCF, that is, that what is essential to our language faculty is a recursive UG, that is, a cognitive module with highly abstract computing capacities.

Also, according to many authors, it seems counterintuitive to see language as an adaptation for other purposes than communication: communication is the central function of language in all species, thus an evolutionary approach to language should take into account this basic feature.

¹¹ Cf. P. Lieberman (1984); P. Lieberman (1996).

¹² Cf. M. Hauser (1996); K. R. Kluender et al. (1987); W. T. Fitch (1997).

¹³ Cf. HCF (2010: 33).

¹⁴ Cf. C. R. Gallistel (1990); D. Dehaene (1997).

Other criticisms, like Jackendoff (2010) point to the “syntactocentric” architecture put forward by Chomsky and his colleagues. According to Jackendoff, a parallel architecture in which phonology, semantics and syntax are more autonomous, is much more evolutionarily plausible than what Chomsky describes. According to Jackendoff (2002) semantics and phonology should be able to interact and generate combinatorial structures without the intervention of the syntactic module. His parallel model allows for an autonomous set of combinatorial rules for semantics and phonology that do not need syntactic mediation. In terms of evolution, this is, for Jackendoff, a more plausible hypothesis: a combinatorial system to associate representations and phonemes (roughly, a proto-language) seems *prima facie* a more plausible adaptive evolution than the abrupt emergence of a sophisticated syntactic competence.

Jackendoff’s criticism is in line with other approaches that stress the centrality of the connection between symbols and phonemes as the most salient aspect of language. Yet, Jackendoff’s position sticks to the generative framework, although he puts forward a quite different version.

Other criticisms are much more radical because they reject the very hypothesis of a universal grammar as the underlying core of linguistic competence. Michael Tomasello for example, argues that language is a cultural product whose evolution is made possible by the kind of symbolic communication that humans are able of (Tomasello 2003). He puts forward an alternative model of language, a *use-based linguistics*, according to which we do not need any innate specific language module in order to develop a linguistic ability. According to Tomasello, the new findings in cognitive science of much more specialized learning mechanisms than general induction help to account for the acquisition of language as a cultural tool used for intentional communication while explaining the variety and cultural richness of the different languages. There are at least two major sets of cognitive abilities that are involved in language learning: a first set that comprises a variety of skills of *intention-reading* (such as for example shared attention, theory of mind, and pointing) and a second one which comprises various skills of *pattern finding*, or categorization, such as the ability to form categories of similar items, or the ability to mapping structures or else to perform statistical analyses on various perceptual and behavioral sequences.

Against Chomsky, Tomasello’s use-based linguistics is concentrated on the idea that use creates rules, and that grammar is derivative on language use. The central tenet of linguistic ability is our capacity to communicate symbolically, conventionally and intersubjectively, a capacity that is not shared with other species.

On the same line, without though endorsing this special theory of language, Terence Deacon and Michael Arbib have argued that the only specie-specific cognitive feature that we need in order to develop a language is a “symbolic” ability, that is, the ability to use arbitrary signs to convey meanings and conventionalize these uses.

To sum up: the central tenet of the debate is to establish whether the key-feature of a language faculty is the universal grammar with its recursive properties, as Chomsky, Hauser and Fitch affirm, or a symbolic competence, that is, the exquisitely human capacity to associate arbitrary signs to referents and intentionally point to the signs to “mean” something, as Tomasello and many others suggest. What is peculiar is that, in both cases, the competences posited to account of the origin of language aren’t in themselves adaptations for communication purposes, but for ensuring the enhanced cognitive performances of human species, such as: planning, theory of mind, social cognition, consciousness, complex spatial and temporal representation etc. The origin of language remain thus a partial mystery: a lucky combination of the evolution of a super-complex modular cognition and of biological characteristics, such as the vocal tract, the larynx and the auditory system that optimized mutual comprehension in our ancestors. Both hypotheses favor an interpretation of language evolution as a continuum from previously adapted functions and organs instead of a sharp saltational hypothesis that would posit the separation between humans and non-humans in the unique presence of language in our species. That is why the most recent advancements on the evolution of language¹⁵ recommend a “multi-component” comparative approach in order to isolate potential precursor of language within different components: social/communicative, vocal/phonological, referential/conceptual, structural/combinatorial, etc.¹⁶

5 Why do we talk? Grooming, gossip and the origins of verbal communication

What is so special of human communication? We are prodigious communicators and communicate on an endless array of topics and subjects: about ourselves, our feelings, our desires and expectations; about others, their emotions, their moral qualities. We communicate about the present, the past and the future of our actions and other people’s actions. We talk about gossip, what other should or should not do, what we are told about how things are, about rituals, traditions. We tell truths and lies in order to get attention from others, or sometimes just bullshits,¹⁷ for example, to “sex up” a story and make us feeling more important. The range of topics on which we communicate is a peculiarity of our species. Animals can have sophisticated systems of communication, such as vocalizations in birds, or alarm calls in various monkeys (Lemasson et al. 2011), but the intentions that trigger the communicative signals among animals are very limited: directions, alarm, court-

¹⁵ Cf. J. Hurford (2007); T. Fitch (2010).

¹⁶ Cf. D. Bar-On (2013: 343).

¹⁷ For the philosophical concept of bullshit, see Frankfurt (1986).

ship, and few others. Humans can communicate about everything: about existing and non-existing states of affairs, about what they wish and what they won't. The fact that they can communicate about non existing states of affairs is a major difference with animal communication. The intentions they have to communicate is somehow difficult to specify: they seem to be a talkative species that invests a lot of energy in communication for the sake of it, even without any second end.

The excess of communication so typical of our talkative species has generated hypotheses on the possible adaptive function of communicating so much. For example, the psychologist and anthropologist Robin Dunbar, advanced the hypothesis in 1997 that talk among humans could be an instrument of social cohesion and social order.¹⁸ Dunbar reported data on the fact that most conversations among humans around the world are centered on *gossip* and not on communicating each other vital factual information. This enormous waste of energies in gossiping about others must have an adaptive function that is different from that of acquiring information. According to Dunbar, talk and gossip have the function of keeping track of and strengthening social relations as the intense activity of grooming among certain primates is devoted to. But why humans evolved such a *sui generis* and elaborated instrument of keeping track of social relations? It depends on the size of ancestral human groups. What distinguishes humans from other social primates such as apes, is that human groups can reach a much larger size than apes' groups. Evidence shows that ancestral human groups counted more than 150 individuals. In these conditions, keeping track of social relationships through grooming is impossible. Hence, language and "small talk" to monitor who does what to whom etc, etc.

This hypothesis faces some objections. First of all, it is unclear why humans should have evolved such a sophisticated communication system and not another one just in order to keep track of social relations: the representational power of language seems to fit the idea that language's communicative purpose is primary that of conveying *true information*, that is, information whose semantic content has potential relevant consequences for the survival of the group. If language were just an instrument for keeping track of social relations, it won't need such a powerful representational capacity.

Also, the hypothesis doesn't say anything on the special shape of our language organ: the parallel with gossip, although conceptually interesting, doesn't say anything about possible precursors of the language faculty, given that, comparatively, gossip and grooming don't share any functional or morphological similarities.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Dunbar (1997).

6 Intentions and the non-natural origins of linguistic communication

What Dunbar's hypothesis lacks is a reasonable explanation of the emergence of language within the special communicative species we are. As I said before, our intentions for communicate are multifarious, and in order to understand what we mean, our interlocutors not only need to understand the sign we used but also the intention we had to convey a particular meaning with that sign. While speculating on the origins of language from a musical protolanguage, Darwin said that language may have evolved when "some unusually wise ape-like animal should have thought of imitating the growl of a beast of prey, so as to indicate to his fellow monkeys the nature of the expected danger; but this would have been a step in the formation of language".¹⁹ What Darwin is alluding to *en passant* is exactly the very special form of meaning that humans are able to convey through symbols. What the unusually smart ape-like humanoid did is to use "symbolically" the growl of a beast in order to indicate the danger: nothing correlates naturally the imitation of a growl to a kind of danger: in order to understand, its fellow monkeys should have attributed it the intention to convey some meaning to them, a meaning that was possible to infer from the context and the special correlation *in that context* between the growl and the danger. That is exactly what modern pragmatics, following the philosopher Paul Grice, calls *non-natural meaning*.²⁰ In a famous article published in 1957, Grice contrasts the *natural meaning* that some signs possess – like when smoke *means* fire or red spots mean measles – with *non-natural meaning*. In order to get the (non-natural) meaning expressed by an utterance we must reconstruct the communicative intention the utterer had by using that expression. He provides the following definition of *speaker's meaning*, that is, the non-natural meaning the speakers intended to convey by her/his utterance:

- (1) By uttering X a speaker U *means_{nn}* to an intended audience A if and only if:
 - a. She/he intends A to have a certain belief *p*
 - b. She/he intends that A recognizes her/his intention as part of the reason why she/he comes up believing *p*

Thus, the speaker's meaning is much more complex than the linguistic meaning encoded in "U". It heavily depends on speaker's intentions of higher order, that is, the intention of making one's communicative intention explicit and recognizable by the audience.

¹⁹ Cf. C. Darwin (1871: 57).

²⁰ Cf. P. Grice (1957).

In a later text,²¹ Grice presents a sort of “evolutionary myth”, to illustrate how *meaning_{nn}* could have emerged from natural meaning. The central element for this transition is the creature’s capacity for intentional communication, that is, for using signs intentionally to point to some of her/his intentions, thus provoking some thoughts in her/his interlocutors. This rich, intentional capacity is the most distinctive trait of human communication.

7 How did verbal communication evolve? A post-Gricean picture

How did language evolve? Is language necessary to think in the way we think now or is the way we think a necessary condition for the emergence of language? The Gricean picture seems to imply that a powerful “Macchiavellian intelligence”,²² that is, a capacity to have complex, higher order thoughts and the intention to manipulate others’ thoughts. That is, the intentional origins of verbal communication presuppose a complex mind with rich metarepresentational²³ capacities and a sophisticated social cognition.

Some authors are against this view because it imposes too much complexity to an ancestral human pre-linguistic mind and thus reintroduces the same problem of the evolution of language at another level: if we need such a sophisticated metarepresentational mind to evolve a language, how did it evolve and for what purpose? Is it an exceptional feature of the human mind, or do exist precursors of intentional communication in the animal kingdom? Primatologists are divided on this point: some think that a rudimentary intentional communication and some mentalizing capacities are present in primates,²⁴ while others think that the kind of mentalizing capacities needed for intentional communication are only human.²⁵

Anyway, more generally, what is the point of explaining the evolution of language by positing an even more complex and difficult to test mental capacity, that is, the capacity for intentional communication?

The reason why this is a necessary step in order to understand the origins of verbal communication is that *no purely coded linguistic communication could have evolved and provided its bearers with fitness advantages in absence of any psychological metarepresentational capacity.*

²¹ Cf. Grice (1982).

²² For the hypothesis of *Macchiavellian Intelligence* or *Social Intelligence*, cf. W. Byrn & A. Whiten (1988).

²³ For an analysis of metarepresentations, cf. D. Sperber (ed.) (2000).

²⁴ Cf. F. Warneken & M. Tomasello (2009).

²⁵ Cf. R. M. Seyfart & D. Cheney (2003); M. Tomasello (2008).

This doesn't mean that we should frame this debate in the classical terms of: *Which came first? Language or metarepresentational capacities?* Many approaches account for a co-evolution of language and intentional communication that explains the sophisticated communicative means so special of our species.

In a 2000 paper, Origgi and Sperber have argued that an evolutionary explanation of linguistic meaning as the intended effect that a certain arbitrary sign had the 'proper function'²⁶ to convey, is compatible with an enriched view of verbal communication. A semantic competence among our ancestors may have conventionalized the use of some linguistic forms as "signs" to convey a certain state. For example, according to the philosopher Ruth Millikan, the proper function of the indicative is to convey information, while the proper function of the imperative is to convey order and command. But even the stabilization of these basic proper functions needed the presence of some rudimentary intentional communication. According to Origgi and Sperber (2000), the intentional capacities needed are, though, much less complex than those presupposed by a full-fledged Gricean communication. Our proto-humans must have been able only to use a certain sign ostensively to point not to an aspect of the world but to one of their internal mental states, and then let the audience reconstruct their states by inferring it from the context and from the proper function of the linguistic sign used. Using Sperber & Wilson (1986/1995) Relevance Theory, Origgi and Sperber show how simple inferences on the relevance of the message (the presupposition that the message is relevant is conveyed by the ostensive use of the linguistic sign) make people infer the mental state to which the speaker wanted the audience to pay attention to. Verbal comprehension is recognition of speaker's meaning. But what a linguistic utterance does is not to encode speaker's meaning, but to provide rich evidence from which the audience can infer speaker's meaning. Could languages playing such a role be described within the general conceptual framework of the evolution of linguistic conventions? A linguistic device does not have as its proper function to make its encoded meaning part of the meaning of the utterances in which it occurs. It has, rather, as its direct proper function to indicate a component of the speaker's meaning that is best evoked by activating the encoded meaning of the linguistic device. It performs this direct function through each token of the device performing the proper function of indicating a contextually relevant meaning, that is, its implicit meaning.

The human language faculty is not an ability to produce and interpret signals: rather, it is an ability to acquire culturally transmitted languages. A psychological capacity of making inferences about the ostensive communicative behaviour of

²⁶ According to Ruth Millikan (1984), who first advanced this idea, the "proper function" of an item is the function to perform which it has historically selected for (independently of its "actual" function: for example, I can use a screwdriver to clean my nails, but the function for which it was selected for is to turn screws).

other species together with a culturally transmitted system of encoded meanings is sufficient to explain how the very special form of verbal communication of our species may have emerged. Successful communication does not depend on the communicator and addressee having exactly the same representation of the utterance, but on having the utterance, however represented, seen as evidence for the same intended conclusion. Different decodings may provide evidence for one and the same inferential interpretation. Here, a metaphor may help. Think of meanings as points in semantic space. Then, according to the code model of language, any device encodes such a point (or several such points when it is ambiguous). According to the inferential model, on the other hand, a linguistic device encodes a *pointer* in the semantic space (or several such pointers when ambiguous) that makes accessible, with ordered salencies, a series of points. According to the code model, a mismatch between the codes of interlocutors must result in the selection of different points, i.e. different meanings, by the communicator and audience. Not so according to the inferential model: differently situated pointers may point to the same meaning. The inferential model is thus compatible with a much greater degree of slack between the codes of interlocutors.

The inferential model of communication makes the evolution of verbal communication appear less mysterious. Humans are the only species that is able to make a lot of inferences about other people's intentions and thoughts. They are also capable of applying their inferential abilities to communicate through cultural sophisticated products, such as language or other cultural tools. The mixture of being a cultural species and having special meta-psychological capacities, creates a context in which the co-evolution of linguistic abilities and intentional abilities is possible. Our language is both a biological and a cultural phenomenon. In order to understand its origins we should pay attention to the relevant biological ingredients as well as to the cultural ones.

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Nikolaus Jakob, Thomas Roessing and Thomas Petersen

3 Effects of verbal and non-verbal elements in communication

Abstract: Since the turn of the millennium, the contribution of nonverbal cues to the overall effectiveness of rhetorical presentations has gained more and more attention among communication practitioners and scholars: practitioners spread myths about the alleged dominance of (audio-)visual cues in almost every communication-context, while scholars tried to identify the effects facial expressions, gestures and vocal characteristics could exert e.g., in TV-debates, talk shows or televised political conventions. Modern research in this field is based on empirical multi-method approaches, including Real Time Response-Measurement (RTR) and often applying experimental designs. Recent research of this kind demonstrates that the content, the rationale of a presentation, seems to dominate the structure of the audience's reception – particularly when confronted with lengthier stimuli. Nonverbal cues exert rather a moderating influence: applied adequately, they can strengthen the effectiveness of the content, while they do not change the basal structure of the recipient's evaluation.

Keywords: Nonverbal cues, Persuasion, Rhetoric, Experimental Research, Real Time Response-Measurement

1 Introduction

One of the most popular examples for the seemingly dominant influence of nonverbal cues in persuasive communication is the famous presidential debate between incumbent Vice-President Richard Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy on September 26, 1960 (Maurer and Reinemann 2007). Seen by most experts as being in the lead, Nixon was still recovering from having been hospitalized; he had lost weight, and was pale. Kennedy, by contrast, did not only appear much younger, agile, and sun-tanned, but he focused on the camera and addressed the TV audience directly. Nixon addressed himself to Kennedy most of the time and avoided looking into the camera. Kennedy is believed to have won the debate – and he won the election. Following the debate, surveys suggested that the TV audience favored Kennedy whereas radio listeners favored Nixon. Maurer and Reinemann argue that this moment gave birth to the myth of the dominance of nonverbal elements in persuasive communication (Maurer and Reinemann 2007: 319–320; see also Nagel et al. 2012: 833).

In the same decade, US-psychologist Mehrabian and his colleagues investigated how their subjects formed an opinion on the mood of a given speaker based on audiotape recordings and photographs (Mehrabian and Ferris 1967; Mehrabian and Wiener 1967). Their findings suggest that vocal characteristics coined the subjects' judgments as long as no images of the speakers were provided. If so, body language seemed to be most influential. According to Maurer and Reinemann, this moment, gave birth to a second myth (Maurer and Reinemann 2007: 320): the so-called communication pyramid, based on the "55–38–7-rule". Following the pyramid's basic assumptions, the effectiveness of a persuasive presentation consists of three different factors: 1. body language, which allegedly is responsible for 55 percent of the effects, 2. voice features, which supposedly contribute 38 percent and 3. the presentation's content – with 7 percent the least important factor. Although these findings did not provide information about the effects of persuasive communication – especially not under real-world conditions –, and although they did not justify a universal formula, the "55–38–7"-myth became very popular among communication-consultants, public relations-experts, and advertising professionals.

Another example for the myths circulating in this field of research is the 'Dr.-Fox-Experiment' conducted by Naftulin et al. in 1970. The researchers set out to test whether different groups of recipients will rate a pseudo-academic speech of complete nonsense ("Mathematical Game Theory as Applied to Physician Education") favorably when presented in a professional and convincing manner. "On the basis of publications supporting the hypothesis that student ratings of educators depend largely on personality variables and not educational content, the authors programmed an actor to teach charismatically and non-substantively on a topic about which he knew nothing." (Naftulin et al. 1973). Naftulin et al. engaged the actor Michael Fox to play the role of "Dr. Myron L. Fox", who "looked distinguished and sounded authoritative". Different groups of recipients (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists) watched the lecture of Dr. Fox. They came to very favorable conclusions about the presenter and the content – even though every single word of the lecture was nonsense. "The three groups of learners in this study, all of whom had grown up in the academic community and were experienced educators, obviously failed as 'competent crap detectors' and were seduced by the style of Dr. Fox's presentation" (Naftulin et al. 1973). This finding gave birth to the so-called 'Dr. Fox-effect'. It came to serve as one more proof for the apparent power of nonverbal communication, even though the study had serious theoretical and methodological shortcomings that did not justify drawing conclusions about the effects of nonverbal behavior in (persuasive) communication. Nevertheless, there is an abundance of articles on the World Wide Web that deduce from experiments like those reported above that the content of a speech determines merely a small portion of its effects. Instead, audiovisual cues are said to be decisive (see e.g., articles in the German and English Wikipedia). As will be shown, it is a complex undertaking for re-

search to disenchant widespread myths such as the ‘communication pyramid’ or the ‘Dr. Fox-effect’.

2 Methodological background

Modern persuasion research generally concentrates on the question of how to present persuasive appeals most effectively (Stiff and Mongeau 2003: 190). Carl I. Hovland and his colleagues made one of the most famous attempts for measuring the effects of persuasive communication. They ascertained that, above all (alongside the characteristics of the audience and the message of the speech), “observable characteristics of the perceived source of communication” are crucial in determining the effect of persuasive communication (Hovland et al. 1953: 11). Nonverbal stimuli belong to this category of observable elements. It consists of a large group of communication cues which can be differentiated into kinetic (body language), vocal (mode of speech and vocal emphasis), spatial (proximity and surroundings) and haptic (touch) cues (Burgoon et al. 2002; see also Knapp and Hall 2005; Manusov and Patterson 2006; Bente and Krämer 2008). These are sometimes supplemented by chronemical (timing and context) and iconic (for example, symbols, pictures) cues (Cronkhite and Liska 1980: 109).

Psychological experiments are the basis for most of the research in this field – such as the famous experiments conducted by Hovland and colleagues. Experiments are controlled procedures to determine effects, i.e. causality. The “key feature common to all experiments is (...) to deliberately vary something so as to discover what happens to something else later – to discover the effects of presumed causes” (Shadish et al. 2002: 3). Psychological experiments test effects of various causes (independent variables) on thinking, feeling, or behavior (dependent variables) of human beings. Most psychological experiments take place in a laboratory setting that makes it easier to control for all possible interferences (“possible influential independent variables not pertinent to the immediate problem of the investigation”, Kerlinger 1986: 367).

The basic idea of the psychological experiment is to submit individuals to a precisely designed treatment and to observe subsequent changes. In order to determine the effect of the treatment, one must at least compare two conditions with each other (Kantowitz et al. 2005: 51). For example, Carl I. Hovland and Walter Weiss (1951) used two conditions in their famous study on the influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. They presented an identical communication to two groups. In one group, a generally trustworthy character presented the communication. In the other group, it was a generally untrustworthy communicator (Hovland and Weiss 1951: 363).

There is a great variety of experimental research designs. The most important differences between designs concern the number of factors, their characteristics,

and the timing of measurements. In their 1951 study, Hovland and Weiss used the factor 'source credibility' in two variations: high and low. They measured the reactions of their research subjects using questionnaires, which they administered before the communication, immediately after, and one month after the experiment (Hovland and Weiss 1951: 636–637). Experimental designs that are more complex employ factors with multiple levels, or even multiple factors. Low, medium and high credibility would be an example for three levels of the factor 'source credibility'. Adding the factor 'gender of the communicator' to Hovland and Weiss' study would make it a multi-factorial experiment.

Every level of a factor or every combination of two or more factors is called 'experimental condition'. In an experiment investigating the effects of male and female (factor 1) sources of low, medium, and high credibility (factor 2), there are $2 \times 3 = 6$ experimental conditions. Every experimental condition requires a sample of research subjects. If the stimulus in this example is a film to be presented to a group of research subjects, researchers have to make six versions of the film and organize six separate movie shows (for an overview see Campbell and Stanley 1963; Shadish et al. 2002).

An experiment is the ideal solution in the investigation of causality. However, there are several factors jeopardizing the validity of experimental research. Comparability of the groups of research subjects and constant conditions for all experimental settings are of paramount importance for the *internal* validity of any psychological experiment. This means the ability of the experiment to test what it is supposed to test. If the experimental groups differ in terms of socio-demographics or other characteristics of the participants, the stimulus alone cannot definitively explain different measurements. The same problem occurs when conditions vary. Other factors relevant to internal validity include testing itself, which can alter people's behavior or maturation, naturally occurring changes between measurements (Campbell and Stanley 1963: 5). *External* validity, the generalizability of experimental findings, is innate to all laboratory experiments in the behavioral sciences: People usually do not perceive verbal and non-verbal communication in a controlled laboratory setting. It often remains unclear to what extent findings from laboratory experiments can be generalized to the numerous situations in which human beings usually communicate (Shadish et al. 2002: 83–93).

Various other *non-experimental* methods either complement or substitute experimental research. In recent years, Real-Time-Response-measurement (RTR) has become popular among researchers in the field. For example, Maier et. al. (2006) used two different RTR systems to investigate audience reactions to televised debates prior to the 2002 general election in Germany. They found both systems to be reliable and valid means to measure the overall (verbal and non-verbal) performance of the candidates as perceived by the audience. However, Reinemann and Maurer (2009) found evidence that RTR-measurement influenced the recall of visual information and the evaluation of a broadcast featuring German politician Angela Merkel in 2005.

Other methods can contribute to verbal and non-verbal communication research as well. However, their share is rather small in comparison to experimental research. For example, it is common to employ survey research to determine the perception and effects of political TV broadcasts, e.g. presidential debates. Yawn & Beatty (2000) used a panel survey to study the presidential debate between Bob Dole and Bill Clinton in 1996. They conclude that their “findings suggest that stylistic considerations were more important to viewers than political considerations when evaluating the candidates.” (Yawn and Beatty 2000: 280) Surveys are an especially important research tool when combined with content analyses. However, it is unusual to employ exclusively surveys or content analyses in verbal or nonverbal communication research. While they are common in political communication research (e.g., in the study of election coverage), these methods are of lesser importance in verbal or nonverbal communication research.

3 Theoretical approaches and findings of experimental research

The greatest challenge for empirical research focusing on the effects of nonverbal communication is the complexity and amount of interwoven stimuli. It is not merely the large number of potentially effective ways to use the human voice and body for communicative purposes that makes designing studies that measure persuasive effectiveness in a valid way so challenging. In addition, the constantly changing interplay of arguments and vocal, mimic and gestural stimuli that makes it difficult to uncover the mechanics of effects via empirical (experimental) research. Consequently, empirical persuasion research has amassed a large number of studies since the 1950s. These studies usually focus on single variables such as voice pitch or speaking rate within the framework of small laboratory experiments (for an overview see e.g., Burgoon et al. 1990; Knapp and Hall 2005; Manusov and Patterson 2006). The following central findings of this large body of research are comparatively well confirmed.

First, audience perceptions differ according to the mode of presentation: Presentations including audio- or audiovisual stimuli generally provide audiences with more information. Gestures, facial expressions, and certain vocal characteristics are likely to contribute to audience-impressions that presentations without non-verbal cues do not. People tend to form their judgments based on this additional information. As it particularly refers to the presenter, the respective judgments mostly relate to him or her. Typical impressions formed by non-verbal cues are e.g., the degrees of nervousness, attractiveness or openness of the presenter (Kepplinger 1987; Frey 1999; Hassin and Trope 2000; Kepplinger 2010a). Nonverbal cues provide non-semantic information on the personality or personal background of an individual, on his or her cultural context and his or her emotional state (e.g.,

Krauss et al. 1996; Burgoon et al. 1990; Marsh et al. 1997). In addition, audiovisual presentations are not only likely to draw audience attention on the presenter's characteristics. At the same time, they are likely to divert attention from the presentation's content (Stiff and Mongeau 2003: 190–195).

Second, research focusing on information processing in the human brain suggests that verbal and nonverbal cues pass through different routes. There are different mechanisms that process these cues: Visual information is processed by the brain with a higher priority (Way and Masters 1996: 56), and cerebral handling of visual information is much faster than the handling of verbal information. Facial expressions, for example, need only a fractional amount of the time verbal information needs to be processed (Libet 1991; Fiske and Taylor 2008: 72). Humans are thus able to form judgments within some milliseconds on strangers based on the latter's nonverbal behavior (Frey 1999). According to neuroscience, visual information is sent directly to the amygdala, an area of the brain, which has evolved prior to other parts – without being processed consciously (Way and Masters 1996; Barry 2005; Nagel, Maurer and Reinemann 2012: 836). Interestingly, these older parts of the human brain are responsible for affective experience. This might serve as explanation for the fact, that visual information about the communicator seems to evoke rather emotional than rational reactions: “Such special processing mechanisms at the neural level help explain the close ties between emotion and nonverbal facial displays at the behavioral level. [...] If the verbal medium is the domain of the cognition, then the nonverbal medium is the domain of emotion.” (Way and Masters 1996: 56).

Third, these findings of neuroscience correspond with modern Dual-Processing-Models of information processing such as the Elaboration-Likelihood-Model (ELM) or the Heuristic-Systematic-Model (HSM) (Chaiken 1980; Chaiken and Eagly 1983; Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Booth-Butterfield and Welbourne 2002; Todorov et al. 2002). Both models explain the different patterns of effects produced by different (verbal vs. nonverbal) modes of presentations with different modes of information processing. According to these models, two modes of persuasion processing exist, depending on the degree of ego-involvement prevailing among the audience. People with high ego-involvement are likely to engage in systematic thinking. They listen to the presentations' content carefully and tend to elaborate the arguments prudently while focusing on the quality of communication content. In this high-involvement situation, nonverbal cues are less important as factors facilitating persuasion (*central/systematic route* of persuasion). On the other hand, recipients who lack interest, information, and – most importantly – involvement, are likely to process information superficially. They do not invest any great effort in the elaboration of the presentations' content. In this low-involvement situation, the quality of arguments is less important. Recipients tend to rely on source characteristics (e.g., the presenter's attractiveness) or characteristics of the source's nonverbal performance (e.g., facial expressions or body language). Nonverbal cues on this *peripheral/heu-*

ristic route (as opposed to the central/systematic route) can be sources of persuasion effects.

Within the framework of the Dual-Processing-Models, the intensity of cognitive elaboration while processing information plays an important role. Several factors are likely to influence elaboration likelihood. When the presented topic is not very relevant for the specific audience, when recipients have a low need for cognition, when there are distracting factors (e.g., audiovisual presentation), or when recipients do not have relevant background knowledge at their disposal, it is likely that information will be processed on the peripheral/heuristic route of persuasion. According to neuroscience, this is the perfect situation for nonverbal cues to become influential because they need a lesser amount of elaboration to be processed. By contrast, when a topic “is personally relevant to a receiver, the receiver is generally predisposed to engage in careful thinking, the receiver has extensive relevant background knowledge, and the receiver is undistracted, elaboration will presumably be high – and the central route of persuasion will be engaged” (O’Keefe 2008: 1476). Hence, when discussing the effects of nonverbal cues in communication, it is crucial to keep in mind the various factors possibly influencing elaboration likelihood.

Fourth, two larger bodies of research can be distinguished – research focusing on vocal cues and research focusing on body language. With respect to *vocal cues*, the following factors seem to influence communication effectiveness: speaking rate, voice pitch/modulation, and speaking fluency. Content presented fluently, smoothly and coherently leads to more favorable evaluations of the presenter’s competence and credibility (e.g., Erickson et al. 1978; Newcombe and Arnkoff 1979). The same applies for a certain degree of vocal variability, variations in volume and a slightly higher speed/speaking rate (Mehrabian and Williams 1969; Pearce and Conklin 1971; Pearce and Brommel 1972; Apple et al. 1979; Gélinas-Chebat and Chebat 1992; Gregory and Gallagher 2002). Overall, speaking too quietly, too monotonously, too stagnantly, and too slowly is very likely to impair the persuasiveness of one’s communication. With respect to *body language*, research indicated that certain forms of facial and gestural activity are likely to trigger positive evaluations of the communicator and the message. A certain body language can evoke more favorable perceptions of the presenter’s credibility and the persuasiveness of his or her presentation (for an overview see Kepplinger 1987; Burgoon et al. 1990; Marsh et al. 1997; Nagel et al. 2012). Facial expressions and gestures generally enhance communication by providing additional information that is not accessible for recipients when processing written messages only (Rauscher et al. 1996; Krauss 1998; Wesp et al. 2001): e.g., information about the presenter’s self-assuredness, physical attractiveness, or nervousness (Kepplinger 1987; Frey 1999; Kepplinger 2010a).

Since it depends on whether a speaker applies nonverbal cues adequately in a given rhetorical setting, whether they are suitable for the presentation’s topic, the

recipients' mood etc., it is not efficient to report all possible effects of different facial expressions, gestures, or postures. However, there are certain forms of body language and vocal performance that are indeed likely to enhance the persuasiveness of presentations. For example, a presenter's gaze (especially his or her eye contact with the audience) is likely to evoke impressions of sympathy or trustworthiness as well as dominance or intimidation (Mehrabian and Williams 1969; Thayer 1969; Burgoon, Dunbar and Segrin 2002). People tend to rate smiling presenters more favorably – with potentially positive effects on the persuasiveness of the latter's messages (Imada and Hakel 1977). Certain gestures are likely to evoke impressions of self-assuredness – presenters using gestures are assumed to be more convincing in general (Mehrabian and Williams 1969; Edinger and Patterson 1983; Burgoon, Dunbar and Segrin 2002). Furthermore, the abstention from gestures leads to a less fluent and straightforward speech production and to the impression of a less vivid and convincing presentation (Rauscher, Krauss and Chen 1996; Krauss 1998; Krauss and Hadar 1999). In general, it seems that presentations are most persuasive when the speaker combines vocal and visual cues in a meaningful and adequate manner and when he or she integrates them well in the overall performance. Recipients seem to judge such integrated verbal-plus-nonverbal presentations generally as more favorable and more persuasive (Burgoon, Birk and Pfau 1990: 163–164).

4 Theoretical and methodological shortcomings of related research

One of the reasons why it is not efficient to report a large number of singular findings from experimental research is rooted in the nature of (audiovisual) persuasive communication. Persuasive performances consist of an amalgam of arguments, appeals, characteristics of the presenter's voice, the way he or she uses his or her voice for persuasive purposes, characteristics of the presenter's bodily appearance, the way the body is used for persuasive purposes, and many more aspects. Researchers need to consider a large number of variables when trying to determine the effect of persuasive communication. It is highly unlikely that there will ever be a universal formula explaining how persuasive communication works and which of its elements are most influential. For researchers, the seemingly endless range of ways in which persuasive stimuli can combine makes it difficult to develop empirical designs that provide meaningful and generalizable findings. This is the reason why most empirical studies investigating the role of nonverbal cues in persuasive communication suffer from serious methodological problems.

First, most (older) studies are rather narrow in focus, piecemeal experiments, and in the majority of cases there is no attempt to link the pieces together. Typically, experimental studies manipulate a single nonverbal cue, e.g., position of the

arms or the speed of a presentation. Burgoon et al. (1990: 141) argue that “(...) nonverbal cues may not be particularly meaningful or potent until combined into sets of related behaviors (...)”. Consequently, it is necessary to design studies that manipulate a larger number of nonverbal cues simultaneously – this would be far more meaningful than “(...) manipulating a single cue in isolation.” (Marsh, Hart-O’Rourke and Julka 1997: 564). Hence, there is a blooming field of knowledge on the separate effects of single cues. In contrast, investigations concerning the *composite effects* of several verbal and nonverbal elements are rare. These, however, are very much needed in order to produce meaningful and valid findings (see Nagel, Maurer and Reinemann 2012: 837).

Second, many studies suffer from comparatively “artificial manipulations” (Burgoon, Birk and Pfau 1990: 141). Hence, there is reasonable doubt when it comes to their external validity. Very few studies systematically investigate the effectiveness of nonverbal cues in persuasive communication based on *realistic stimulus material* – offering insights into the functioning of everyday-life persuasion (see e.g., studies in the field of political communication; Nagel, Maurer and Reinemann 2012).

Third, because of the fact, that there are few studies investigating the persuasive amalgam consisting of verbal, vocal, and visual cues, research has not yet provided significant insight into the *relative potency* of verbal, vocal, and visual cues or has investigated the interplay between them: “(...) the examination of isolated cues prevented relative comparisons among cues as to their importance. We do not know, for example, whether speaking tempo or gestural animation contributes more to persuasive impact (...)” (Burgoon et al. 1990: 141; see also Burgoon, Dunbar and Segrin 2002: 462–463). Against this background, the universal claim of the so-called communication pyramid and the inherent “55–38–7”-rule is misleading. Apart from few studies (which are reported in the next section of this chapter), there is no empirical data demonstrating which verbal, vocal, or visual cue exerts the *strongest influence* and/or which combination of cues exerts the *strongest overall effect* (Stiff and Mongeau 2003: 190; Jakob et al. 2011; Nagel et al. 2012). In fact, there is still no empirical confirmation for a universal hierarchy of effectiveness, attributing stronger effects to nonverbal cues.

5 Answers of current research

Jakob et al. (2011) and Nagel et al. (2012) address the problems and shortcomings mentioned above. Both teams of researchers conducted studies meeting three important requirements pointed out by Burgoon et al. (1990) and Marsh et al. (1997). First, the studies focused on realistic combinations of nonverbal stimuli, specifically on the variation of vocal characteristics, facial expressions, and bodily gestures simultaneously. Second, the researchers conducted their studies within compara-

tively naturalistic settings employing an integrated ‘verbal-plus-nonverbal’ persuasive presentation. Third, they employed multi-method-measurements able to uncover differences in the overall persuasiveness of the presentations as well as specific differences in the contribution of certain nonverbal stimuli to overall persuasiveness. Jakob et al. (2011) combined a representative survey, a split-ballot experiment, laboratory experiments and RTR-measurement in order to ascertain the effects of a parliamentary speech. Nagel et al. (2012) combined RTR-measurement and content analysis for measuring the effects of verbal and nonverbal cues presented during the television debates between German chancellor Schröder and his challenger Merkel in 2005. With respect to the relative effects of verbal and nonverbal cues, both research groups came to similar conclusions.

Using a representative survey, Jakob et al. (2011) identified a paragraph of a speech focusing on the benefits of globalization as especially persuasive compared to other stimuli. They subsequently used this passage in a laboratory experiment. A professional speaker presented three different performances of the text: 1. no gestures/no variances in facial expressions plus no variance in vocal delivery; 2. no gestures/no variances in facial expressions plus explicit variances in vocal delivery; 3. explicit variances in gestures/facial expressions plus explicit variances in vocal delivery. Jakob and his colleagues recorded the performances in a film studio. Then they presented all three films to independent samples of subjects that had to a) evaluate continuously the persuasiveness of the presentation via RTR-measurement and b) to fill out a questionnaire after confrontation with the stimulus. A second follow-up experiment was conducted using the first and second condition of the first experiment – this time, two groups of subjects had to listen to audio-only presentation of both stimuli, no visual cues were provided (measurement was the same as in the first experiment).

Both experiments show that the speaker’s performance, as well as certain qualities of the speech can profit from vocal emphasis as well as from facial expressions and gestures. Audiences evaluated presentations with explicit vocal emphasis and/or with both, explicit vocal emphasis and explicit facial expressions/gestures more favorable in certain points. Subjects perceived the presentations as more vivid and lively; to them the presenter appeared to be more powerful and more self-assured. However, vocal and visual support did not lead to more positive evaluations of other presentations – or characteristics of the presenter (e.g., accuracy, authenticity, and thoroughness). Certain nonverbal cues, especially facial expressions and gestures, led the subjects to rate the speech less favorably. RTR-measurement indicates that the subjects rated speeches presented with the aid of vocal emphasis and supported by body language slightly more favorably. However, the graphs indicating the overall persuasiveness of the speech did not vary in curve shape – the response pattern was the same across all experimental conditions. The graphs only varied in the mean value, indicating that the content of the presentation was more or less responsible for determining whether certain parts of the speech were per-

ceived to be relatively more or less persuasive than others. In sum, the content determined the overall pattern of persuasive effects. Nonverbal techniques, however, were able to enhance existing effects of the presentations' content.

Furthermore, subjects rated the audio-only versions (second experiment) more favorably than the audiovisual versions (first experiment), providing further evidence that there is no general primacy of the audiovisual presentations over other forms of delivery. Hence, the persuasive power of a presentation's content can benefit from an audience not distracted by visual impressions. In line with the dual processing models (ELM, HSM) presentations focusing on the textual or the audio channel can be more convincing under certain circumstances because they are more likely to be processed via central/systematic routes of persuasion. Thus, the absence of visual impressions might lead to more favorable evaluations of the persuasive message itself.

Nagel et al. (2012) focused on the following research question: "Which channel of audio-visual messages (verbal, visual, or vocal) affects viewer's impressions of political candidates most?" (Nagel et al. 2012: 837). On the day of the TV-debate in 2005, Nagel and colleagues invited subjects to watch the debate between the candidates for chancellorship in Germany. Nagel et al. (2012) measured the overall impressions of the two candidates' performances continuously during reception via RTR-measurement and compared the graphs with the data of content analyses. The content analyses measured verbal, vocal, and visual aspects of Schröder's and Merkel's performances. By using this design, the authors were able to analyze the effects of certain rhetorical strategies, arguments, vocal emphasize, gestures and facial expressions on a second-by-second basis. In sum, their findings indicate that verbal characteristics (content) are more important in determining the effects of persuasive communication than nonverbal characteristics (vocal and visual cues). For example, certain emotional appeals, the use of commonplaces, the use of evidence, emphasizing certain political issues, playing the role of the incumbent or the challenger, and a rather negative or positive tone shaped audience impressions much more than nonverbal cues. The latter only slightly influenced audience evaluations. Merkel, for example, benefited from gazing into the camera and speaking with a higher frequency. Nagel et al. conclude (2012: 846): "Indeed, the most striking finding of our study is that for both of the candidates, verbal message elements had by far the strongest impact on viewers' impressions."

6 Conclusions

The findings of recent studies such as the studies of Jakob et al. (2011) and Nagel et al. (2012) indicate that there is in fact no such thing as a universal hierarchy of effectiveness claimed by the communication pyramid or the "55-38-7"-rule. Different forms of presentation generally engage different information processing and

evaluation pathways in the subjects' brains. Subjects perceive messages differently depending on composition, context and audience characteristics. In addition, messages exert their influence differently according to the situational composition of relevant factors. Presentations armed with nonverbal techniques are not per se more effective than others are. If the claims of the communication pyramid or the "55–38–7"-rule were correct, content itself would have had exerted a much less significant influence over the general pattern of effects in both lines of research presented above. With regard to the data presented by Jakob et al. (2011), the nonverbally armed speeches would not only have had been more persuasive in general but the RTR-findings would have had produced significantly different effects patterns. In particular, the comparative analysis of the two experiments (audiovisual vs. audio only) would have had revealed more substantial differences. With regard to the data presented by Nagel et al. (2012), nonverbal elements such as gaze, smile, gestures, as well as the intensity of voice, its pitch and the speech rate would have had exerted a dominant influence on impression formation – but the opposite was the case: the audience predominantly relied on content factors (verbal cues).

There is one conclusion from classical rhetoric that turns out to be the most important finding in the field of modern persuasion research as well: "Persuasive communication can only productively be observed and analyzed in the correct setting and context. Thus any attempts to come up with simple, universal recipes for successful and effective presentations are doomed to failure – there are no simple, universal explanations for responses to or the effects of persuasive communication." (Jakob et al. 2011: 265). Whether or not an audience finds a speech convincing is not dependent on the composition of auditory and visual stimuli alone. Attributing a rudimentary 5, 7 or 10 percent share of the overall persuasive effect of a persuasive presentation to its content is a more than unrealistic simplification. This, however, does not imply that the verbal channel (the content of persuasive communication) is solely responsible for dictating its effects – such a claim would be equally simplistic and unrealistic. The content of a persuasive presentation has a great and most probably crucial influence on at least the structure of its effect. Similar curve shapes of the graphs measuring the persuasiveness of the presentations are a clear indication for this reading of the findings reported above. Acoustical and visual elements, as long as they are not completely inappropriate, contradictory or lacking credibility, can enhance existing effects of the presentation's content. They can affect positively or negatively how people perceive the arguments and the presenter. They can lessen the effect of weaker arguments and add power to stronger ones. The Elaboration-Likelihood-Model and the Heuristic-Systematic-Model support this interpretation of the data. Both state that there might be a trade-off between different modes of stimulus reception and evaluation.

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II. Explicit and implicit verbal communication

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4 Semantics and verbal communication

Abstract: The present chapter considers the role of semantics in verbal communication, examining the way in which the information encoded in linguistic units contributes to construct the meaning of utterances and larger units of discourse. We introduce the key aspects of meaning construction, connecting the notions of predicate-argument structures, presuppositions and semantic frames. For this purpose, we employ an approach known as Congruity Theory. According to this approach meaning compositionality can be seen as the application of predicate terms to argument terms, guided by the exigency of congruity. The restrictions on argument saturation imposed by predicates are shown to be the source of presuppositions in discourse and to require the addressee to satisfy them or accomodate them in the developing *common ground* of the exchange. Moving from the argument-frames of predicates, we focus on the ways in which language represents situations and events in the world, demonstrating the framing power of predicate selection.

Keywords: meaning construction, congruity theory, predicate-argument structures, presuppositions, semantic frames

1 Introduction

The present chapter deals with meanings that are conveyed by the use of linguistic structures – such as words, phrases, clauses and sentences – in acts of verbal communication. This concern is the disciplinary purview of *semantics*. To put it in another way, we will be concerned with how the information encoded in linguistic units contributes to the construction of the meaning of utterances and larger units of verbal communication. The contribution of linguistic units to the meaning of utterances has been often considered a somewhat trivial matter: we often understand linguistic meanings in terms of a container metaphor, where meanings are there *in* the words. This container metaphor is itself part of a broader “conduit metaphor” of verbal communication (Reddy 1979), where communicating is equated with packing content in a container and moving the container through a conduit towards a destination where it will be unpacked. This metaphor has sometimes hold sway also over communication research. Examples could be found in the classic method of *content analysis*, defined by Berelson (1952) as a “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the *manifest content of communication* [our emphasis]”.

According to Berg (2001: 242) *manifest content* corresponds to “those elements that are physically present and countable”, first of all words. The meaning associ-

ated with these elements is *de facto* assumed to be transparent to the analyst, as well as to the members of the intended audience (cf. Berelson 1952: 19). According to a standard content analytic terminology already introduced in Berelson (1952), manifest content is opposed to *latent content*. Taking into account latent content requires that “the analysis is extended to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data” (Berg 2001: 242). Berelson (1952: 19–20) mentions “a simple news story on train wreck” as an example of message for which the analysis of *manifest content* is sufficient, while “an obscure modern poem” exemplifies communication exhibiting a high level of “latency” of the content, for which reliable analysis is not possible.

In fact, semantically-oriented analysis of news discourse has shown that “even simple-looking news stories are often rather complex, and the events they describe rather less distinct than we supposed [...] they are not telling a simple, clear tale, but are replete with ambiguity, unclarity, discrepancy and cavity” (Bell 1998: 65–66). More generally, a close examination of how words and other linguistic units contribute to making meaning in discourse reveals that they do not “carry” meanings but rather provide pointers and guidance to their construction by the audience in context. These meanings are themselves stratified, involving foregrounded representations and a background that can remain unfocused while still playing a crucial role in determining the contextual appropriateness of the utterance.

In the following pages we will provide a brief presentation of some key aspects of meaning construction, introducing a few pivotal notions of semantics, namely *predicate-argument structures*, *presuppositions* vs. *semantic entailments*, *semantic frames*. Our discussion will be mostly limited to examining how language contributes to “what is said” (Recanati 1989). Additionally, we will restrict our focus on the ways in which language represents situations and events in the world, leaving aside discursive and interactional meanings. It has been argued convincingly that the above mentioned key semantics notions can be productively extended to the study of broad stretches of discourse, rhetorical organization and interactional aspects (cf., Grimes 1975; Seuren 1985; Searle and Vanderveken 1985; Rigotti 1993; Asher and Lascarides 2003; Forbes-Riley, Webber and Joshi 2006). Even if these extensions of the semantic approach to discourse are of great potential value for discourse analysis in communication, due to space limitations, we will only be able to cursorily allude to them.

The present chapter is complementary to the chapter on the understanding *implicit meanings* authored by Victoria Escandell-Vidal, which concerns the pragmatic processes of implying and inferring that allow communicators and addressees to go beyond linguistic guidance in meaning construction, be it by *enriching* “what is said” with the vividness of experiential and contextual detail or by *implying* more than “what is said”.

This chapter is also related to those which deal with *figurative meanings* (Marcel Danesi) and *evaluative meanings* (Peter White). The former deals with modes of

meaning constructions that have for a long time been considered exceptional, less transparent and more creative than ordinary language use. The latter is devoted to those elusive *emotive* meanings, which philosophers have often judged to be inherently distinct in nature from ordinary *descriptive* meanings (cf. Stevenson 1948) and which have been sometimes conflated with the constellation of secondary *connotations* more or less loosely associated with the use of certain words, as opposed to the stable representational *denotation* firmly attached to them (cf. Rigotti and Rocci 2006; Rocci and Monteiro 2009).

2 Discussing semantics and guns that kill people

If we were to believe the wisdom of the English idiom, *discussing semantics* would be a pointless exercise, as witnessed by countless Internet discussions where the *discussing semantics* cliché is used, very effectively, to flag a point of disagreement as irrelevant and to cut it short, as in example (1) below.

- (1) I'm annoyed by it, if you're not then fine. For me *that's semantics* and and I'm not gonna argue about that (from a sports Internet discussion forum).

Yet, this is an English *idiom*. Here's a first observation that should give us pause and make us contemplate the hypothesis that semantics is, in fact, relevant in communicative interactions and worth discussing. The Italian and the French languages, for instance, do not have this idiom. This has immediate consequences on the availability of this move in a discussion. It is not that French and Italian speakers cannot flag a dispute as purely verbal and henceforth irrelevant. They can and, on occasion, they do. What they lack is a ready-made expression to perform such a move, so that performing it becomes more costly on the part of the speaker and involves a greater risk of not being immediately understood by the addressee. Beyond that, the lack of this idiom in Italian or French may hint at differences in cultural beliefs about the merits of discussing words and their definitions as a step in dealing with disagreements.

As observed by Sally McConnell-Ginet (2008: 497), the *discussing semantics* cliché manifests the commonsensical belief that “which form conveys which meaning is essentially arbitrary and thus not a matter for sensible folk to worry about”. These views are, of course, “partly right”, as McConnell-Ginet concedes, “right, but those offering them often seriously underestimate the cognitive, social and historical dimensions of linguistically mediated communication”. McConnell-Ginet is particularly concerned by the potentially negative social impact of certain meanings, that is by “loaded language” as characterized by linguist Dwight Bolinger (1980) in a popular book entitled *Language: the loaded weapon*. The title relates to one of Bolinger's favorite examples of linguistic obfuscation discussed in the book:

(2) Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

The slogan, as Bolinger (1980: 68) reminds us, enshrines “the standard argument of the gun lobby in the United States against efforts to restrict the possession of firearms”. Bolinger produces an ironic series of parallel examples, defending “other interests and occupations”:

Some careless groundskeeper must have said at some time or other: “It wasn't the hole in the course that broke your leg, it was your stepping into it”. As it would be convenient for governments anxious about their food supplies to say “Food does not nourish people, eating does”. (Bolinger 1980: 68)

Let us start introducing some elements of the conceptual toolbox presented in this chapter to discuss Bolinger's example (2). The problem with (2) is that the two occurrences of the verb *kill* appearing in it do not manifest the same predicate concept. The relation *kill*₁ that holds between *guns* and *people* is not the same relation of the relation *kill*₂ that can hold between *people* and *people*. The slots that each relation opens for its argument terms to fill are different. More precisely, the two predicates assign different *semantic roles* to their first argument term: the predicate *kill*₂ (x, y) requires x to be the *agent* of the action denoted by the verb, while *kill*₁ (x, y) requires x to be an *instrumental* cause. The difference between the roles of the two x slots can be highlighted when we observe that *kill*₂ can have an optional third argument z taking the role of the *instrument*, as in (3):

(3) *kill*₂ (x, y, z): People (x) kill people (y) with guns (z)

It is thus clear that there is no correspondence between the x arguments of *kill*₁ and *kill*₂ as the parallelism of created by the slogan falsely suggests. Rather, x of *kill*₁ corresponds to z of *kill*₂, the two predicates being *converses*, reading the same scene from different angles. The linguistics we used in discussing this example is pretty classic, not to say old. It was Charles J. Fillmore, in a seminal 1968 article, the first to introduce a system of “deep-structure cases” such as *Agentive* and *Instrumental* (cf. Fillmore 2003 [1968]: 49), nowadays more often called *semantic roles*, and to describe the different admissible arrays of semantic roles among which broad classes of action verbs, such as *kill*, can alternate. The polysemy between *kill*₁ and *kill*₂ is thus a highly regular and predictable one. These kind of alternations are nowadays seen as but one aspect of *regular polysemy* (Apresjan 1973), whose mechanisms have been widely studied by semanticists for the last two decades (cf. Pustejovsky 1995; Asher 2011).

What is interesting in Bolinger's example is not semantics per se but its rhetorical significance: the simple semantic analysis helps us to uncover a *fallacy of equivocation* in the pro-firearms slogan. As it is often the case, the equivocation is instrumental to perpetrating another fallacy: thanks to the equivocation the slogan can

easily refute a *straw man*, that is the improbable adversarial standpoint that ‘Guns (x) kill₂ people (y)’ – in other words that guns are (comparable to)¹ *agents* in the process of killing people.

The phenomenon of equivocation and the fallacies it masks reveal that the imperative to cut short the discussion about the meaning of words – instead of being simply a manifestation of the non-sense attitude of those who legitimately refuse being told what is the correct, original, true meaning of a word – can leave us ill prepared to counter the ploys of those who, so-to-say, want to have their meaning and eat it. A recent book by argumentation scholars Macagno and Walton (2014) is devoted to examine the persuasive role of the (re-)definition of words in argumentative discourse, including both explicit discourse moves providing persuasively crafted definitions of key-words and the implicit redefinition that is obtained by *coercing* (cf. Pustejovsky 1995) the word in a sentential and discursive context that is incongruous with the most accessible meaning.

For instance, Macagno (2011) examines the failed attempt by the Obama administration to implicitly redefine *hostilities* when claiming that U.S. military operations in Libya in 2011, involving support to NATO air raids as well as attacks carried out with unmanned drones, did not require congressional approval. Approval is required for *hostilities* lasting more than 90 days, but – the Obama administration argued – US military operations in Libya “do not involve sustained fighting or active exchanges of fire with hostile forces, nor do they involve U.S. ground troops”. As observed by Macagno (2011), such an argument presupposes (rather than proposes) that features such as “active exchanges of fire” and/or “presence of ground troops” are necessarily part of the definition of *hostilities*, while as long as one can hit the enemy safely from a distance without reprisal no *hostilities* are taking place.

The frequency of such public arguments about meaning in the media, what Alan Durant (2010: 2) calls “meaning troublespots” and the recurrent difficulties, which Durant profusely documents, in regulating them purely on the basis of an appeal to “ordinary understanding” should provide a good argument that semantic analysis is needed in the study of verbal communication.

3 Predicate-argument structures

The view of semantic analysis we adopt here draws directly on Congruity Theory (Rigotti 1993; Rigotti and Rocci 2001 and Rigotti 2005), but its fundamental features can be found in slightly different forms in a broad tradition of linguistic semantics.

¹ The precise nature of the straw man created through the equivocal parallelism between guns and people taking the Agentive role remains, of course, strategically vague. One construal of the straw man that avoids the more patent incongruity of having the non-human guns taking the role of

According to this view, the fundamental operation of meaning composition is the application of predicate terms to argument terms. Doing a semantic analysis thus means to rewrite natural language utterances in terms of predicate-argument structures (cf. also Mel'čuk 2004 2012, 2013, 2015). In this perspective the semantic contribution of virtually every content word in a language can be represented in terms of a predicate. To analyse the meaning of a lexical item means, first of all, to establish what kinds of predicates it can manifest when it occurs in its different syntactic constructions.

The idea that the fundamental articulation of meaning consists of predicate-argument structures can be traced back to Plato (*Sophista* 262 a–d). The dialogue argues that articulated *logos* requires the interweaving (*symplokè*) of complementary kinds of signs, namely nouns (*onomata*) and verbs (*rhemata*), while heaping together words of one kind does not result in a connected discourse. This venerable conception, on which much of linguistic semantics is based, has been recently argued to be grounded in the neurophysiology of visual and auditory perception (Hurford 2003). According to Hurford (2003: 261), “neural evidence exists for predicate-argument structure as the core of phylogenetically and ontogenetically primitive (prelinguistic) mental representations”, so that the formula *PREDICATE* (*x*) can be seen as “a schematic representation of the brain’s integration of the two processes of delivery by the senses of the location of an arbitrary referent object, mapped in parietal cortex, and analysis of the properties of the referent by perceptual sub-systems” (Hurford 2003: 261).

Not all predicate terms can be applied to all argument terms. Predicate-argument structures that make up the “texture” of meaning are characterized by a requirement of *congruity* between the predicates and their arguments. Predicates impose conditions, sometimes called *selectional restrictions*, that the arguments must fulfil. A first shot at a characterization of the way in which a predicate predefines its argument frame could consider the following three levels:

1. The number of arguments selected by the predicate;
2. The semantic type of the argument selected;
3. The order in which the arguments are arranged.

If a lexeme manifesting a predicate which presupposes a certain type of arguments is connected with a lexeme manifesting an argument of this type, an ontologically possible state of affairs is constructed; in the opposite case a non-sense arises. On the other hand, if two readings of a lexeme differ either in the semantic types of the entities which can appear in their argument frames or in the number of conceptually required arguments, they have to be considered as expressing different predicates.

agents would be a denial of the alleged standpoint that weapons are the efficient cause of the killing.

The incompatibility of the requirements on the argument places can be established with the help of appropriate semantic tests. For example, the *zeugma test* (cf. Lascarides, Copestake & Briscoe 1990: 43–44) allows us to see when different uses of a word depend on diverging incompatible ontological requirements – as opposed to general or vague requirements:

- (4) *Neither *Louis* nor *the word processor* were able to *read* the document.

The same applies, even more clearly, to readings involving a different number of entities. For instance we cannot combine (a) and (b) and obtain an ellipsed sentence like (c):

- (5) a. The rock on the slope *moved*.
 b. John *moved* the picnic table.
 c. *The rock on the slope *moved*, and John the picnic table.

We cannot change the number or the ontological type of the argument places without changing the content proper of the predicate. In our first example, the meaning of the verb *to read*, insofar as its subject is a human being, manifests a semantic content, and hence a predicate, which is very different from the one expressed in occurrences with a non-human subject². In the second example what is indicated by the impossibility of ellipsis is the fact that *to move* manifests two different predicates, the two-place predicate *to move*² (x_2, x_1) being the *causative* of the one-place predicate *to move*¹ (x_1)³.

The third level at which predicates predefine their argument frames requires further commentary as it brings into the picture the non-truth conditional dimensions of perspective and salience. Compare (6a) and (6b) below:

- (6) a. Mary is *taller* than John.
 b. John is *shorter* than Mary.

The two predicates *taller* and *shorter* are said to be *converses* of each other as they depict the same situation – we can say that the two sentences are truth-conditionally equivalent – but present it from a different perspective: (6a) is statement about Mary, it takes Mary as its focus of interest, while (6b) reads the same situation taking John as focal point. It is clear that here *order* of arguments does not mean their linear disposition on the surface of the text; it rather functions as a shorthand

² In the former case, to read means “to reconstruct the phonetic form and retrieve the meaning of a written text”; while, in the case of the word processor, it means “to process symbols stored on a permanent storage device”.

³ That John *moved*² the picnic table means that John performed an action which caused the table to *move*¹.

to refer to the meaningfulness of the mapping between argument places and syntactic structures that each predicate predefines for its argument frame. For instance, in English, as well as in large share of the world's languages the mapping of an argument on the syntactic subject ensures a particular prominence of the argument in the perspective adopted on the scene. We will come back to these issues of perspectivization in the following pages, discussing the role of semantics in *framing*.

4 Compositionality and context

Meaning compositionality in natural language discourse can be seen a process guided by the exigency of congruity between predicate and argument terms, as predicates combine with argument terms according to the restrictions they impose at the three levels discussed in the previous section.

Compositionality, however, is less straightforward than what many philosophers, logicians and formal semanticists have liked to assume in their attempts to cast natural language semantics into the mold of the formal languages of logics and mathematics (see Montague 1970 for an early and influential attempt). Charles Fillmore (1984) was among the first to suggest a broader view of compositionality that is now becoming common place among linguistic semanticists. On the one hand, an account of compositionality has to consider the significant weight of *idiomaticity* in natural languages, in the form fixed expressions, collocations (cf. Mel'čuk 2015; Stubbs 2001), as well as syntactic constructions that carry an additional meaning of their own (Kay and Michaelis 2008). On the other hand, compositionality requires an "integration process" that is accomplished "with the help of language-external information of a variety of kinds" (Fillmore 1984: 126). We will briefly consider here this second aspect, examining how the determination of predicate-argument structures involves in many cases the integration of contextual information into a skeletal or somehow 'gappy' schema provided by linguistic structures.

Consider the semantic interpretation of the common noun *foreigners* in the following example:

- (7) The survey also revealed that 27 per cent of locals did say they saw value in working with *foreigners*. They also agreed that *foreigners* tend to be less demanding at work, and better skilled.
(WebCorp)

We can see that its content and extension cannot be determined until we find out the country with respect to which we are speaking – in the example it's Singapore. *Foreigner* is clearly to be analysed as two-place relational predicate, taking a hu-

man being as its x_1 and a state as second argument x_2 , of which the human being *is not a citizen*. Interestingly, there is no way a sentence like (8a) could be understood as expressing a minimal proposition with an indefinite tacit argument like (8b).

- (8) a. John is a foreigner.
b. *There is a country* of which John is not a citizen.

The contextual part of the meaning of *foreigner* really requires the hearer to search the common ground of the discourse participants (Clark 1996) to find a *specific* country salient in the context of utterance.

A more complex example is offered by the well-known context-dependency of the adjective *good*. Consider the following examples, taken from Zeno Vendler's (1967) seminal paper on this adjective:

- (9) a. John is a good *dancer*.
b. John is a good partner *to dance with*.
c. Venus is a good planet *to observe*.
d. This shoe is good *to eat*.
e. John is a good *poet*.
f. John is a good *father*.
g. Venus is a good *planet*.
h. Mumbo is a good *baboon*.

The adjective *good*, involves a free predicative variable whose value has to be saturated deictically in the context of utterance. This variable must correspond to a relevant goal, purpose, function or finality. As Vendler (1967) reminds us, this kind of context-dependent functioning was first detected by Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1098a, in Vendler 1967: 464).

The noun which the adjective modifies provides a highly accessible context for saturation and when *good* modifies nouns that clearly connote a function (e.g., *dancer*, *poet*) or for which a range, or hierarchy, of functions, can be inferred (e.g., *father*) this may be sufficient to assign the variable. Sometimes, the noun lacks this *telic* component, as in “the sad case of Mumbo the good baboon”. “Being a baboon”, Vendler (1967: 464) observes, “is certainly not having a function; moreover baboons ordinarily are not things that acquire functions, either”. Complements specifying the relevant function may present (e.g., *to dance with*, *to observe*) but often it is simply the context of utterance that provides what is needed: even in poor Mumbo's case, *pace* Vendler, a context where scientists are selecting the best specimen for an experiment can satisfy the free variable of *good*. Clearly, even the functions associated with the modified nouns can be overridden by contextual information, as shown by the case of the shoe *good to eat* for a starved arctic explorer (Vendler 1967: 462).

5 Predicates and presuppositions

Let us now consider more closely the nature of the type restrictions that predicates impose to their arguments. It has been observed by several scholars (Seuren 1985; Rigotti 1994; Rigotti and Rocci 2001; Asher 2011) that these restrictions behave like presuppositions and require the addressee to satisfy them or accommodate them in the *common ground* of the utterance.

Consider a simple sentence like *Louis reads a book* as a fragment of a possible discourse utterance. The two-place predicate *to read* (x,y) imposes several quite specific presuppositions on the referents that occupy its argument places. In Figure 1 below the arrows represent the relation between the predicate and its arguments, the rectangular boxes placed over the arrows represent the presuppositions that characterize its argument places. In the example these presuppositions are satisfied by the traits characterizing the actual arguments filling the argument slots *Louis* and *a book*. These traits, which are congruous with the presuppositional requirements (*i.e.* they are more specific) are meant to represent part of the developing *common ground* of the utterance (Stalnaker 2002 and Clark 1996). Thus, they are not limited to the traits entailed by the lexical meaning of the arguments (*a book* is a written text, printed, consists of several pages) but include all the information associated to the real referents in the context of utterance as, for instance, the existence of a certain Louis, known by the speaker and the hearer.

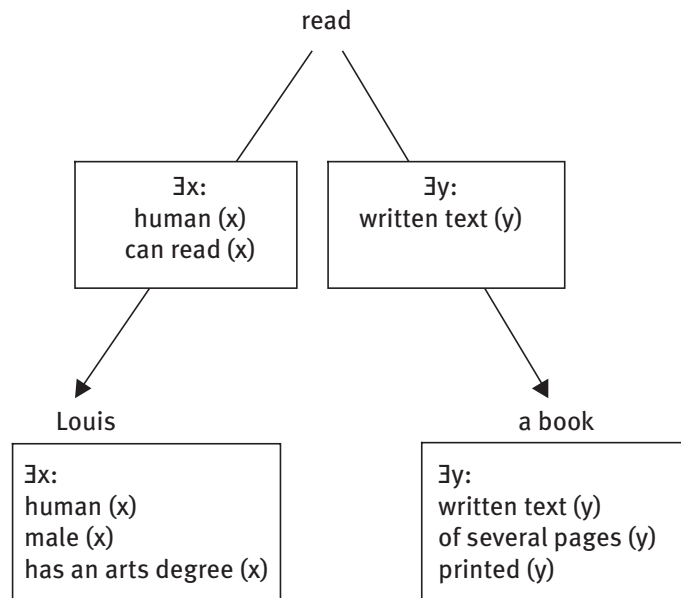


Fig. 1: Graphical representation of congruity in a predicate-argument structure.

If there is an incompatibility between the conditions imposed by the predicate and the characteristics of the real arguments the utterance becomes semantically incongruous, a nonsense, as in *The books read the newspaper* or *John reads the squirrel*. These cases are seen as similar to the classic cases of presupposition failure due to the void reference of definite descriptions (e.g., *The current King of France is bald*).

In fact, the presuppositions associated with argument places are not limited to *type presupposition*, also called *categorical presuppositions*. They also include *factual presuppositions* and *existential presuppositions*. In example (11) below, the predicate *to continue* (x_1, x_2) imposes a communicatively interesting factual presupposition on its second argument place:

- (10) Real, two-way communication between our stakeholders and Heineken is crucial. That is why in 2008, *we will continue* to actively seek dialogue with stakeholder groups across these seven focus areas (from Heineken's 2008 Corporate Social Responsibility Report).

Here the company, by using *continue* invites the readers to accommodate in the *common ground* the information that the company *was already* 'actively seeking dialogue' with its stakeholders in the past.

While presuppositions prompt a recovery of the taken for granted information in the common ground of the utterance, their communicative significance often hinges on the powerful mechanisms of accommodation that govern their processing in ordinary discourse: when a presupposition cannot be satisfied in the actual common ground, accommodation dictates that the required information should be added to the common ground as long as it does not conflict with the information already present in it. This phenomenon is also known as the *informative* use of presuppositions (Sbisà 1999).

Existential presuppositions, with which the philosophical literature has been familiar for a long time (for a review, see Beaver 2001: 7–30), are also part of the conditions imposed by predicates on their arguments, as shown by examples (11), (12), (13) and (14) below.

- (11) John *ainted* the fence.
 (12) Michelangelo *ainted* the Last Judgment.
 (13) John is *bald*.
 (14) The Abominable Snowman *exists*.

In (11) the predicate *to paint*, understood as 'to cover with color a surface' presupposes the existence of the surface. In contrast, *to paint* understood as 'to create a pictorial work of art' in (12), which is, in fact, a distinct homonymous predicate,

does not. Being *bald* in (13) presupposes, among other things, the existence of the creature involved by this state. In contrast, as observed by Seuren (1985), the predicate *to exist* in (14) does not presuppose the existence of its argument. In fact, existence is what the predicate entails.

Some scholars (cf. Seuren 2000; Rigotti and Rocci 2001) have indeed hypothesized that *all* presuppositional phenomena in language have their structural source in the conditions imposed by predicates on their argument places. This hypothesis requires to postulate predicates at an “abstract level of analysis” (Seuren 2000: 279), therefore it will not be pursued in detail here. In the next section we will instead focus on examining the connection predicates, presuppositions and *frames*.

Seuren (1985), developing a style of representation introduced earlier by Fillmore (2003 [1969]) sketches a semantics where two types of conditions are associated with predicates: “satisfaction conditions”, which represent the semantic entailments of the predicate, and “preconditions”: when a satisfaction condition is not fulfilled the result is falsity, whereas the failure of a precondition results in nonsense, or, as Seuren would put it in “radical falsity”. A Seuren-style semantics for the unary predicate *bald*, for example, can be given as follows (without pretensions of real lexicographical adequacy):

bald (*x*) = [preconditions: *x* exists, *x* belongs to a category whose members are normally covered with hair in prototypical places || satisfaction condition: the normal hair is absent from *x*]

From a rhetorical viewpoint an interesting case is represented by predicates that exhibit basically the same informational content and differ only in the way they distribute this content in the presuppositional preconditions and in the satisfaction conditions. The verbs of judging analyzed by Fillmore (2003 [1969]: 170–173) are a classic example.

To criticize (*x*₁, *x*₂, *x*₃) = [preconditions: *x*₁ exists, *x*₁ is human, *x*₂ exists, *x*₂ is human, *x*₃ exists, *x*₃ is an activity *a* or the result of an activity *a*, *x*₂ is responsible of *x*₃ || satisfaction condition: *x*₁ makes a discourse in which he declares that *x*₃ is negative]

To accuse (*x*₁, *x*₂, *x*₃) = [preconditions: *x*₁ exists, *x*₁ is human, *x*₂ exists, *x*₂ is human, *x*₃ exists, *x*₃ is an activity *a* or the result of an activity *a*, *x*₃ is negative || satisfaction condition: *x*₁ makes a discourse in which he declares that *x*₂ is responsible of *x*₃]

The entries given above for the predicates *to criticize* and *to accuse*, adapted from Fillmore (2003 [1969]) make explicit how *to accuse* presupposes the negativity of *x*₃, whereas *to criticize* entails the negativity of the situation. Conversely, where criticism presupposes that ‘*x*₂ is responsible of *x*₃’, accusation does not have this

factual presupposition as alleging the responsibility of the accused is the very point of the act of accusation. This kind of analysis is able to cast light on subtle lexical shifts, such as the one in example (15), which would otherwise escape the attention of the discourse analyst as well as of the journalistic writers that produced them.

- (15) A top adviser to Hillary Clinton's campaign-in-waiting *accused* the George W. Bush administration of using private emails to skirt transparency rules in 2007. John Podesta [...] *criticized* Bush administration officials for using Republican National Committee email accounts for official business.
(From thehill.com, March 03, 2015)

In (15) the change of verb is motivated by the difference in the propositional content of the activity occupying the x_3 slot: one can *criticize* the use of private e-mail for official business taking for granted that such use is documented and advancing the standpoint that is reprehensible, but one *accuses* of engaging in this practice “in order to skirt transparency rules” as such an intention can be presented as obviously reprehensible but at the same time is not yet proved.

Evaluative presuppositions such as the one exhibited by *to accuse* are worth special consideration as they represent a widespread means of embedding judgments in discourse presenting them as taken for granted and socially accepted in the discourse community. For instance, when we say that x_1 is *degenerating* into x_2 we presuppose that x_2 is a condition worse than x_1 , when we say that x_1 *admitted* to x_2 we presuppose that the content of the admission is a truth that is somewhat painful, embarrassing or damning for x_1 , when we say that x_1 *succeeded* in x_2 we presuppose that x_2 was a goal for x_1 , when we say that x_1 *failed* to x_2 we presuppose either that x_2 was a goal of x_1 or that x_2 was a standard to which x_1 was morally, socially or legally expected to conform.

6 Frame semantics

Consider the factual presuppositions attached to the predicate *to chase* in a sentence like (16) below,

- (16) The police did not *chase* the suspects.

Fillmore (2006 [1982]: 397) observes that when this verb “is used of two beings moving in the same course, the movement of the one in front is presupposed, independently of whether the movement of the individual designated by the subject of the verb is asserted, denied, questioned, or supposed”. As Fillmore observes, the question of *chasing* or *not chasing* arises in a particular kind of situation or scene: “in a setting in which one person is running, especially where it is understood that

that person is fleeing, it is relevant to consider whether some other person is or is not going to try to prevent that first person from getting away.” Fillmore’s point, in commenting on this verb, is that presuppositions associated with argument slots in lexical predicates may ultimately depend on the structure of larger, more global, sub-lexical models that we use to understand everyday situations. Fillmore calls such a model a *frame*. This relationship between predicates, presuppositions and frames is poignantly illustrated by George Lakoff (2003: 32) with an example taken from US political discourse:

On the day that George W. Bush took office, the words “tax relief” started appearing in White House communiqués. Think for a minute about the word *relief*. In order for there to be relief, there has to be a blameless, afflicted person with whom we identify and whose affliction has been imposed by some external cause. Relief is the taking away of the pain or harm, thanks to some reliever. [...] The relief frame is an instance of a more general rescue scenario in which there is a hero (the reliever), a victim (the afflicted), a crime (the affliction), a villain (the cause of affliction) and a rescue (the relief). The hero is inherently good, the villain is evil and the victim after the rescue owes gratitude to the hero.

Communication scholars are familiar with Goffman’s sociological notion of *frame* as a basic definition of a situation “built up in accordance with principles of organization” that shape the understanding of events and regulate social events and “subjective involvement” in them (Goffman 1974: 10–11). This notion of frame, and related notions developed in cognitive and social psychology, has formed the basis of various attempts at “frame analysis” by communication scholars aimed at reconstructing culturally shared patterns of interpretation used by communicators. Despite the notorious vagueness of Goffman’s frame analysis, the concept has been productively applied to various areas of communication research. One noteworthy example is journalism where frame structures have been used to understand “the cognitive patterns of interpretation” used by journalists in the newsroom (*journalists frames*) as well as “the patterns of meaning articulated in news content” (*news frames*) (Brüggerman 2014: 63).

Communication scholars are usually less aware of the parallel and largely independent development of the notion of *frame* in linguistics, due primarily to the work of Charles Fillmore since the early 1970s (cf. Fillmore 2003 [1977], 2006 [1982]). The notion of frame emerges as a direct development of Fillmore’s research on the concept of the *argument frame* of a predicate and on the *roles* that characterize each argument place. In his earlier works Fillmore (2003 [1968]) tried to develop a fixed list of *semantic roles* (*Agentive*, *Instrumental*, *Dative*, *Factitive*, *Locative*, etc.) and examined how different predicates provide representations of scenes selecting, highlighting or shadowing participants’ roles. Later, he moves to a local view of roles as defined in a relation to cognitive models of scenes, which he calls *frames*.

The meaning of lexical predicates has to be understood as relative to these background scenes or frames. Consider the four-place predicate *buy* (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4) in example (17):

- (17) [x_1 : John] *bought* [x_2 : a house] [x_3 : from Elizabeth] [x_4 : for € 500,000]

Each of the argument slots corresponds to a role in a ‘commercial transaction’: x_1 is the *buyer*, x_2 the *goods*, the x_3 *seller*, and x_4 the *price*. These roles, however, are also evoked by other words referring to the commercial event (*spend*, *sell*, *pay*, *charge*) including the nouns denoting the roles themselves (*goods*, *price*, etc.). Each of them evokes the whole *scene* of the ‘commercial transaction’, while putting in focus different aspects of it:

- (18) [x_1 : Elizabeth] sold1 [x_2 : a house] [x_3 : to John] [x_4 : for € 500,000]
 (19) [x_1 : The house] sold2 [x_2 : for € 500,000]
 (20) [x_1 : John] paid [x_2 : € 500,000] [x_3 : to Elizabeth] [x_4 : for the house]
 (21) [x_1 : Elizabeth] charged [x_2 : John] [x_3 : € 500,000] [x_4 : for the house]
 (22) [x_1 : € 500,000] is the price [x_2 : of the house]
 (23) [x_1 : The house] costs [x_2 : € 500,000]

In this perspective we come to better appreciate the notion of *converse* that we introduced in section 3: converse predicates relating to the same frame “index portions or aspects of some conceptual or actional whole” (Fillmore: 2003 [1977]: 282). The meaning of each predicate cannot be understood if not with respect to the whole *frame* commercial transaction. Frame elements evoke parts of a culturally shared conceptual scheme which allow us to understand the scene in terms of roles and relations between roles. The choice of one predicate or the other activates, or highlights, certain elements of the schema leaving other elements unexpressed, and present the whole scene from a particular perspective. For instance (18) takes the perspective of Elizabeth, the seller, while (20) takes the perspective of John, the buyer.

From the point of view of the rhetorical choices of the communicator, frames involve two levels of meaningful choice. First, the communicator can decide to present a given situation according to different conceptual frames. More than one frame can apply to a given situation, and the possible schemes can have very different implications for the rhetorical objectives of the communicator. A classic example of alternative framing is offered by Aristotle in *Rhetoric* (III, 2, 1405b) when he observes that the Orestes can be rightly called both *mother-slayer* and *father’s avenger*. The two epithets select two alternative framings of the very same action perpetrated by Orestes. Second, once a given frame has been chosen, the choice of the specific lexical predicates within it can serve to selectively activate certain components of the frame and to select a viewpoint on the scene. Discourse analytical work on the news texts is rich in contributions dealing with the framing power of predicate selection (see for instance Van Leeuwen 1995).

Fillmore (2006 [1982]: 385) makes an important distinction between situations where the “lexical [...] material observable in the text ‘evokes’ the relevant frames in the mind of the interpreter by virtue of the fact that these lexical forms [...] exist as indices of these frames” and situations “in which the interpreter assign coherence to a text by ‘invoking’ a particular interpretive frame”.

On the one hand, the power of linguistic forms in evoking extremely precise frames should not be underestimated. For instance, as soon as a payment from x_1 to x_2 is referred to as *alimony* we immediately know that x_1 and x_2 were married, their marriage ended in divorce and that their divorce settlement would involve the payment of money from x_1 to x_2 . (Fillmore 2003 [1977]: 238–239). once we refer to an x_1 as a *heretic* we immediately evoke the frame of a “religious community which has a well-defined notion of doctrinal correctness” and characterize x_1 ’s religious opinions as ‘wrong’ from the viewpoint of such an orthodoxy (Fillmore 2006 [1982]: 384).

On the other hand, the underlying conceptual structure of a frame can be invoked to provide a coherent interpretation of semantic materials that are congruous with the presuppositions characterizing its *role slots*. Example (24) below is an excerpt from a speech given by UBS chairman Marcel Ospel on February 23, 2008, in which he summarized the events of the financial crisis before the shareholders of the bank:

(24) [...] 1. Last year, the major securities markets in the United States *experienced a sharp and unexpected downturn*. 2. Prices of previously highly-rated securitized loans *dropped sharply* and liquidity in the market promptly *dried up*, subsequently affecting credit markets worldwide. 3. Market risks *changed with incredible speed* and on a scale that could never have been expected. Even seasoned financial experts see the current phase in the market as possibly the most difficult one for the financial services industry since the crash of 1929. 4. So far, this financial crisis *has resulted in* writedowns worldwide of more than 300 billion US dollars. 5. As a result, in recent months UBS has *had to recognize* writedowns of more than 21 billion Swiss francs in several stages, *resulting in* a loss for the 2007 business year of 4.4 billion francs. At the same time, the UBS share price, which *had reached* an all-time high back in May 2007, *came under enormous pressure*. [...]

(Speech by Marcel Ospel, Chairman of the Board of Directors, at the Extraordinary General Meeting of Shareholders of UBS AG in Basel on 27 February 2008)

The passage features a series of predicates that select non-human, inanimate entities as their x_1 (*markets, loans, liquidity, the financial crisis*) some of them considerably abstract (*market risks, UBS share price*). These predicates convey a) notions of sudden, violent, fast unintentional movement (*sharp and unexpected downturn, dropped sharply, changed with incredible speed*), b) physical processes taking place in the inanimate world such as evaporation (*drying up*), atmospheric pressure

(*came under enormous pressure*), and c) non-agentive causality (*resulted in*). The only predicate enjoying a human organization as its x_1 is *had to recognize*.

While the predicates in this passage do not directly *evoke* any definite comprehensive framing of the situation, one could argue that they strongly invite the *invocation* of a natural disaster frame as the correct model for understanding the financial crisis. In such a frame the role of human entities can only be that of spectators obliged to recognize the damage and of targets of the pressure exerted by natural forces. This hypothesis of frame invocation finds indirect confirmation in a subsequent passage of the speech (25) where the crisis is referred to as a *storm*.

(25) [...] the *storm* that then broke over the financial markets.

It is clear at this point that the framing invoked in (24) and later evoked in (25) is metaphorical in nature and involves the mapping of the whole social frame of the financial markets onto the natural, inanimate domain of meteorology. The rhetorical expediency of such a frame in minimizing human agency and responsibility in the crisis may not be purely coincidental. Metaphor represents a powerful framing device (cf. Wallis and Nerlich 2005) prompting the audience to make sense of a whole domain of experience in terms of another. Like all framing devices, metaphors “inevitably highlight some aspects of reality and hide others” (Semino and Masci 1996: 267).

Arguably, by discussing frame invocation and metaphorical framing we have now entered the territories of implicit meaning understanding and of figurative meaning, which make the subject of other chapters of the present Handbook. This is therefore a good occasion for closing our brief introduction to semantic analysis as a resource for understanding meaning construction in verbal communication.

7 References

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Peter R. R. White

5 Evaluative contents in verbal communication

Abstract: This chapter discusses recent scholarship concerned with the analysis of language interpreted as expressing evaluative meanings. It considers work undertaken within semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and corpus linguistics and makes special reference to recent developments within the computational linguistics field of “sentiment analysis”. The chapter explores evaluative meaning making under two broad headings: 1. attitudinal evaluations by which positive or negative assessments are conveyed and 2. evaluative positionings by which propositions are construed as more or less reliable, contentious or agreed upon. Under the first heading, the distinction between explicitly attitudinal (positive/negative) meaning making and implicitly attitudinal meaning making is discussed. Contributions to the understanding of implicit attitudinal meaning making provided by the corpus linguistic notions of “pattern grammar” and “semantic prosody” are explored, along with how computational sentiment analysis has and might deal with the challenge posed by such meanings. Under the second heading, there is a discussion of the various approaches to dealing with language by which authors take up different stances towards the propositions being advanced in the text. The “truth-functional” orientation of some scholars is contrasted with the dialogistic approach developed within the Appraisal framework of Martin and White (2005). The literature that explores the evaluative functionality of attribution is also considered, specifically that addressed to how it is possible for the authorial voice to favour or disfavour a proposition even when it has been “neutrally” attributed to an external source. Such language poses particular challenges for automated sentiment analysis.

Keywords: evaluation, stance, subjectivity, attitude, opinion, sentiment, appraisal, modality, evidentiality, engagement, hedging and boosting, attribution, sentiment analysis, opinion mining

1 Introduction

Given that the linguistics mainstream for most of its history has paid only occasional attention to evaluative meanings (see, for example Malrieu 1999: 1), it is perhaps paradoxical that today the analysis of evaluative meaning making has become a multi-million dollar industry – under the computational-linguistic rubric of “sentiment analysis”. As students of the history of linguistics will be aware, for much of

the 20th century most of those linguists concerned with meaning focussed largely on issues of denotation and truth conditionality, with “denotation” understood as the “reference” of lexical items and as “those definitional features which are strictly necessary to the univocal identification of the referent” (Rigotti and Rocci 2006: 443). Evaluative meanings by which speaker/writer¹ attitudes and stances are expressed were typically characterised as “connotational” and, as such, seen as much less tractable in terms of systematic, principled analysis and as in some sense peripheral or secondary to the concerns of semantics. Thus for example, while denotational meaning is said to be a matter of “features which are strictly necessary to the ... identification of the referent”, connotation is said to “correspond to supplementary features” (Rigotti and Rocci 2006: 443). One notable exception to the above has been the Systemic Functional Linguistics of Michael Halliday and his colleagues. In Halliday’s linguistics, the interpersonal aspect of meaning making has always been seen as of equal importance to the referential (see, for example, Halliday 1994).

Now the tables have been turned somewhat, or at least something more like a balance established, as evaluative meaning has increasingly become the focus of scholarly attention by semanticists, discourse analysts and corpus linguists. Perhaps most noticeable has been the computational linguistic interest mentioned above, as information technology companies, from small internet start-ups to the trans-national corporations, invest millions in developing computer software for identifying and analysing the expression of evaluative meaning in text. The impetus for this comes, of course, from the exponential growth over the last decade in what is termed “social media” as billions of internet users turn to communicating with the world at large via do-it-yourself websites and weblogs. These legions of internet users opine, pass judgement and express their feelings about all manner of products, services, prominent people, cultural artefacts, political parties, news events and social issues. The IT companies offer software which will track, it is promised, all this online evaluative meaning making, providing reports on who and what is currently being praised or applauded, and who or what censured or criticised. Under the rubrics of “sentiment analysis” and “opinion mining” (see, for example, Pang and Lee 2008; Liu 2012), this software, with greater and lesser degrees of accuracy, automatically identifies attitudinal expressions, determines if they are positive or negative, assigns scales of attitudinal intensity and then maps trends in the nature of the attitudes being expressed towards particular evaluative targets across one, a few or very many texts.

The large number of companies offering such services – as many as 60 in the United States alone in 2012 according to Liu (2012: 3) – would seem to suggest that

¹ While the observations advanced in this chapter generally apply both to speaking and writing, for convenience and because most of the examples of language discussed are from written texts, reference will only be made to the “writer”.

these computational linguistic techniques are at least to some degree successful, at least accurate enough to satisfy the paying customers seeking information on how their new product, service or campaign is being viewed out there in the blogosphere. Some of the technologies are reportedly even sophisticated enough to automatically separate out “fabricated” positive reviews (termed “opinion spam”) of hotels, newly released movies, electronic devices and so on from the genuine article (see Jindal and Liu 2008).

It seems, therefore, that the analysis of evaluative meaning making in text has very much come into its own, in both theoretical and applied contexts. It is timely then that this chapter reviews both earlier and more recent scholarship directed at providing definitions and recognition criteria for language which may be held to be “evaluative” and at exploring the socio-communicative and ultimately ideological functionality of these meanings. This scholarship is considered under two broad headings: 1. accounts of those attitudinal evaluations by which positive or negative assessments are conveyed and 2. accounts of those evaluative positionings by which propositions are construed as more or less reliable, contentious or agreed upon. Under the first heading, the distinction made between explicitly attitudinal (positive/negative) meaning making and implicitly attitudinal meaning making is discussed, with some close attention paid to the understanding of implicit attitudinal meaning making provided by the corpus-linguistic notions of “pattern grammar” and “semantic prosody”. Under the second heading, there is a discussion of the various approaches to dealing with language by which authors take up different stances towards the propositions being advanced in the text. The “truth-functional” orientation of some scholars is contrasted with the dialogistic approach developed within the Appraisal framework of Martin and White (2005).

Throughout the chapter reference is made, where appropriate, to the recent work within computational sentiment analysis because it is interesting in its own right and because, by considering its accomplishments and the difficulties it faces, we can derive further useful insights into the nature of the linguistic mechanisms by which evaluative meanings are made.

2 Describing and defining the notion of evaluative expression

In the literature the term “evaluation” (along with the closely related terms “stance” and “subjectivity”) is generally used to cover meanings which, while quite diverse in their communicative functionality, nevertheless all share the property of reflecting or revealing the writer’s personal involvement in the meaning making. For example, in defining for their use the term “evaluation”, Thompson and Hunston describe it as a “broad cover term” for those meanings which function to express “the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance toward, viewpoint on or feel-

ings about entities or propositions that he or she is talking about” (2000: 5). They state that evaluative meanings can involve attitudes with respect to “certainty or obligation or desirability or any number of other sets of values”. While there is some variation around the margins, virtually all the literature on evaluative language includes evaluative positioning with regards to 1. positivity/negativity (where the writer is presented as favourably or unfavourably disposed either to some experiential phenomenon or to some element of the text), 2. positioning as regards what is typically understood as the “epistemic” status of propositions (indications as to the degree of authorial investment in the proposition, assessments as to the proposition’s warrantability or contentiousness) and 3. deontic positioning with respect to the writer’s view of the need or necessity for some action or behaviour. Accordingly it is upon these particular evaluative functions that this chapter focuses since they can be presumed to be central to current scholarly concerns.

It is also important to note that, for at least some scholars, evaluation is not an intermittent or occasional effect in text but, instead, is omnipresent, with all utterances unavoidably involved in some form of evaluative positioning. Thus in his 1932 *Linguistique generale et linguistique francaise*, Bally divided sentence elements into “dictum” and “modum”, with the former being the sentence’s contents and the latter being the expression of the speaker/writer’s subjective view of those contents (Bally 1965(35): 36). More recently, Hunston has stated, “Indeed, it may be said that subjectivity and ideological value permeate even the most objective of discourses. It can reasonably be argued that every text and every utterance is evaluative, so that the phenomenon itself disappears, to be replaced simply by “language” (Hunston 2011: 19). White takes a similar line when outlining a Bakhtinian framework for the analysis of authorial stance, arguing that all utterances involve positioning by the speaker/writer either with respect to prior utterances by other voices on the same subject or with respect to potential responses to what is being asserted. Thus he argues that even bare, categorical assertions (i.e. formulations without any overt hedging, intensification or other forms of qualification) involve a “stance of dialogic disengagement [which] is highly charged rhetorically. The bare assertion in this broad sense is “modal” – it represents a particular inter-subjective stand” (White 2003: 265).

3 Attitudinal evaluation – conveying a positive or negative assessment

As indicated, a key function of language classified as “evaluative” is to convey a positive or negative view. This can either be a view of the experiential entities, happenings and states-of-affair referenced by the text or a view of propositions about these experiential phenomena. Both these attitudinal functions are exemplified in the following extract from an online reader’s comment attached to an article

in the *Rolling Stone* magazine about firearm-control law reform in the United States. The comment's author is responding to an assertion by the article's author that the US government should implement laws to restrict gun ownership on the grounds that recent surveys have shown popular opinion to be overwhelmingly in support.

- (1) Please stop repeating bad statistics. That whole “90 % of America wanted gun control” was simply made up BS, generated by biased polls run by gun control supporters like the NY Times Group. Reputable groups like Pew and Gallup find that increased gun control is supported by about 50 % of the country, and opposed by 50 %.

For the President to get on air and accuse the NRA of lying, while using these fabricated “statistics” underlines the hypocrisy behind the whole gun control position. The media also lied during this witch-hunt against legal firearms owners. Making up ridiculous “facts”. [...]

This bizzaro-retro gun control dogma needs to be dumped into the trash bin of history. It's pointless and counter-productive (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/gun-control-45-percent-of-the-senate-foils-90-percent-of-america-20130417>).

3.1 Attitudinal “stability” (“prior polarity”)

This extract contains a number instances of a type of attitudinal expression which the literature generally agrees are relatively straightforward analytically – lexical items which are felt to be largely stable in explicitly conveying positive or negative assessments. Thus, for example, Hunston and Sinclair state that adjectives which attribute evaluative qualities are “easily identified intuitively” (Hunston and Sinclair 2000: 83). This assumption that there are lexical items which have stable, explicitly attitudinal meanings across different texts and contexts also underlies much of the computational sentiment analysis work. Thus Wilson et al. (2005: 1). state:

“A typical approach to sentiment analysis is to start with a lexicon of positive and negative words and phrases. In these lexicons, entries are tagged with their a priori prior polarity: out of context, does the word seem to evoke something positive or something negative. For example, *beautiful* has a positive prior polarity, and *horrid* has a negative prior polarity”

These purportedly stable, explicitly attitudinal terms may apply both to phenomena (“real world” entities, happenings and states-of-affairs) and to meta-phenomena (propositions about “real world” entities, happenings and states-of-affairs). Instances of this type of expression applying to phenomena in the above extract include “reputable” as a descriptor of “groups like Pew and Gallup”, “biased” as descriptor of certain “polls”, “witch-hunt” as a descriptor of the behaviour of the media and “hypocrisy” a descriptor of the behaviour of the “the whole gun control” lobby.

Instances of such stable, explicitly attitudinal expressions applying to meta-phenomenon include “bad” as a descriptor of certain “statistics” and “made up BS [bull shit]” as a descriptor of the quoted proposition “90 % of America wanted gun control”.

One obvious challenge for automated computational sentiment analysis systems which immediately presents itself is that of the range or comprehensiveness of the pre-compiled² dictionaries/lexica of attitudinal terms upon which, as indicated above, they rely. These lexica typically contain several thousand entries. For example, the WordNet-Affect subset of the Wordnet lexical knowledgebase (Strappavara and Valitutti 2004) includes 4,787 attitudinal items. Obviously the software can only identify expressions in texts as attitudinal where the word or words in question are present already in the reference lexicon and, accordingly, is likely to “overlook” rarer lexemes or those which are neologisms. Thus, for example, while it is likely that a significant proportion of the attitudinal terms contained in the above extract would be found in the precompiled lexica (for example, “bad”, “biased”, “hypocrisy”) it is unlikely that “bizzaro-retro” would be included. Since the typical purpose of sentiment analysis systems is to determine the overall attitudinal orientation of texts, rather than to produce the delicate qualitative findings sought by discourse analysts, then a problem would only arise if the text (or texts) in question features a significant number of such rarer and hence previously unclassified attitudinal terms. In efforts to meet this potential challenge, some sentiment analysis systems apply mechanisms for automatically extending the range of the lexica of attitudinal terms which they employ, including, for example, algorithms which seek to identify “new” attitudinal terms by attending to expressions which, while not themselves attitudinal, typically occur in association with explicitly attitudinal items.

While this may at first glance appear to be an issue only for the computational linguist, further consideration reveals that there are interesting questions here as well for those whose concerns are with human rather than computational “understanding”. It seems likely that many readers of the above extract would not previously have encountered the term “bizzaro-retro” (an enquiry using a popular internet search engine which indexes billions of World Wide Web pages found a few instances of “retro-bizzaro” but none of “bizzaro-retro”). Nevertheless it is likely that readers would interpret the meaning here as attitudinal and as negatively so. The meaning-making mechanisms here are of some interest. Firstly, of course, there is the recognition that “bizzaro-retro” is attitudinal (i.e. conveying a positive or negative assessment) as opposed, for example, to offering some non-attitudinal

² These lexica have been compiled using both human annotation and computational data mining mechanisms. Predictably there is considerable discussion and debate about how best to construct such dictionaries of attitudinal meaning. See Devitt and Ahmad (2013) and Tabaoda et al. (2011) for further discussion.

classification or description. Both co-text in general and specific grammatical arrangements are in play here. As the left-most pre-modifier in a complex nominal group, the term occurs in the slot very frequently occupied by attitudinal adjectives. In this role it pre-modifies the head noun “dogma”, a term which is not only of itself frequently negative but which is subsequently described in this text as needing “to be put in the trash bin of history” and as “pointless and counter-productive”. Additionally, there are the negative evaluations of the gun-control lobby which occurred earlier in the text. Accordingly it would be attitudinally incoherent for “bizzaro-retro”, once recognised as attitudinal, to convey anything but a negative evaluation. Interestingly it is the influence of co-text which seems crucial here, rather than any inter-textually stable meanings which might be associated with the term itself or its two component parts (“bizzaro” and “retro”). This point will be taken up below.

3.2 Co-textual conditioning: attitudinal instability

This discussion of co-textual influences lead to another key aspect of attitudinal meaning making which is widely recognised in the literature: that many lexical items are not stable across contexts in terms of the attitudinal meanings they may convey. In this the literature can be said to be endorsing Firth’s now widely quoted dictum that, “the complete meaning of a word is always contextual, and no study of meaning apart from a complete context can be taken seriously” (1935: 37). In some cases it is a matter of a lexical item being involved in attitudinal meaning making in some contexts and in non-attitudinal meaning making elsewhere. Thus, in the above extract, “fabricated”, when applied to “statistics”, conveys a negative attitude which is close in meaning to “dishonest” or “false”. In other cases, the meaning conveyed by the word form is non-attitudinal, as the following extract from the Collins Wordbanks 550-million-word general corpus of English demonstrates.

- (2) Holwerda said that the Cormorant’s owners had brought in a load of specially **fabricated** alloy plates from a shipyard in Finland.

While such word forms, in context, usually provide no problems for human interpretation, they can, of course, present serious difficulties for automated systems. While the lexica accessed by these systems may contain information that such a term has multiple senses, and that one sense is attitudinal and the other not,³ it

³ WordNet, for example, indicates that the verb fabricate has two senses: 1. “put together out of component parts” and 2. “make up something artificial or untrue”. The lexicon of attitudinal terms might tag such a term as both “negative” and “neutral”.

still remains for the system to determine which of these senses applies in a given context. Assistance can be rendered here via some of the insights arising from corpus linguistic studies, specifically insights into what Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 125) term “latent patterning”, and more specifically what Stubbs has termed “semantic preference” (Stubbs 2001: 64). This is the phenomenon by which a node form collocates (co-occurs), not with one or two words but with a range of words which can be analysed as belonging to a semantic set. Where a node form co-occurs with more than one such semantic set, then this is evidence that two different meanings may be in play. Thus a key-word-in-context search⁴ of the Collins Wordbanks corpus for *fabricated* reveals at least two such semantically “preferred” sets. By far the largest set includes words which act to name meta-phenomena, communicative processes or artefacts by which propositions are advanced. These include the following: *account, accusation, allegation, charges, claims, confessions, data, documents, evidence, excuses, information, magazine article, memories, memo, message, news story, quotes, portrayal, records, results, research* and *stories*. A smaller though nonetheless still large set includes words which reference the physical products of typically industrial manufacturing processes. These include: *aircraft parts, aluminium panels, axels, bolts, foam, foods, metal products, micro-chip* and *tubing*.

For these insights to be operationalized in automated systems, they would obviously need access to thesauri capable of providing information about this type of set membership, if they are to reliably classify terms such as *fabricated* as either attitudinal or non-attitudinal. The WordNet knowledgebase is one such thesaurus which, since it is organised as a multi-level hierarchy of increasingly general hypernyms, could in principle provide this type of information.

The variability of the meanings associated with such word form lends support, of course, to the proposition that it is not individual lexical items which convey meanings but rather word combinations in particular co-textual settings, the view which has been advanced, following Firth, by Sinclair (1991, 2004) and other corpus linguists. Under this view, it is not lexical items which act as expressions of attitudinal meaning but rather particular combinations of words and classes of words in particular co-textual environments.

It is noteworthy in this regard that it is common for sentiment analysis technologies to operate, not on single word items (termed “unigrams” in the literature), but rather on two or three word sequences (termed “bigrams” and “trigrams” in the literature). Thus, for example, an “unsupervised” sentiment analysis algorithm developed by Turney (2002) assigns attitudinal orientations not to single items, but to pairings of words in which the first word is either an adjective or an adverb and the second word a noun. While this obviously provides for only limited recognition

⁴ The search used parts-of-speech identifiers to search for the term as an adjective occurring before a noun.

that meaning making is co-textually contingent, it can nonetheless be seen as recognition of the notion that it is not individual word forms which make meanings.

In addition to cases such as that exemplified by “fabricated”, where the word form can be involved in either attitudinal or non-attitudinal meanings, there are cases where a term may function positively or negatively, according to the co-text. The term “retro”, one element of the combination “bizarro-retro” from the above extract, exemplifies this case.

A search of the Collins Wordbanks corpus provides numerous examples where it contributes to a negative attitudinal evaluation. The following is one example.

- (4) In Blur’s respect for The Kinks, Elastica’s fondness for art-punk, and Oasis’s wide-eyed Beatles-worship, there was a clear sense of the arrival of a generation steeped in a new classicism – what came to be maligned as “**retro**”.

Against this, Wordbanks also provides numerous examples of it being used positively.

- (5) We could have a carnival queen competition in the village hall and they’d all wear bikinis and I could be the judge! It would be brilliant – all **retro** and very villagey and totally wonderful,

Such cases are, of course, further demonstration of the principle that meanings are made not by individual lexical items but word combinations, in given co-textual settings.

3.3 Co-textual conditioning of attitude: grammatical patterns and semantic prosodies

3.3.1 A grammar of evaluation

The corpus linguistics literature provides additional important insights into the mechanisms by which words in combination make attitudinal meanings. One key insight follows from the work of Sinclair, Francis, Hunston and their colleagues (see for example, Hunston and Francis 1999) on what they term “local grammars” or “pattern grammar”. Hunston and Sinclair outline the key notion as follows.

... every sense of every word can be described in terms of the patterns it commonly occurs in; and secondly, that words which share a particular pattern typically also share a meaning. (Hunston and Sinclair 2000: 83)

From this follows the possibility that there are grammatical patterns which will typically or even uniquely be associated with words which convey evaluative meanings in general and, perhaps more specifically, with words which convey attitudinal evaluations (positive/negative assessments). In “A Local Grammar of Evaluation” Hunston and Sinclair set out a series of such patterns. For example, they

present the pattern consisting of “*it* + link-verb + **adjective** + clause” (e.g., “It was wonderful seeing you.”) and propose that it is “a good “diagnostic” of evaluative adjectives, as all adjectives that occur in the pattern are evaluative” (Hunston and Sinclair 2000: 84). The meanings involved here include not only attitudinal values (positive/negative assessments) but other sub-types of evaluation: for example “It was obvious that the play was over.”; “It was surprising to see her there.”; “It was certain that they couldn’t escape.” In *Pattern Grammar*, Hunston and Francis (1999) identify patterns which are associated with a narrower range of evaluative meanings. Of particular relevance for our current concerns are those patterns which strongly associate with attitudinal meanings. For example, they discuss the pattern “*it* link-verb + **adjective** + *of* + noun + to-infinitive” (Hunston and Francis 1999: 104) and note that this pattern occurs only with adjectives which either indicate positive/negative attitudes (“It was courageous of him to speak out.”) or assessments of typicality (“It was uncharacteristic of her to arrive so early.”).

Such patterns are of obvious interest for computational linguists. They offer the prospect of the automatic identification of explicitly evaluative (and possibly attitudinal) terms in texts, without recourse to precompiled lexica of attitudinal meanings. For those concerned with human interpretations of meaning they are of interest in that they provide for further insights into how it is word combinations in context which make attitudinal meanings and not individual words. This point is demonstrated when we consider formulations such as “It was big of you to take the risk” (Hunston and Francis 1999: 105). The term *big* is typically used to convey assessments of relative size, not positive assessments of ethical standing, as is the meaning here. As Hunston and Francis observe, in the case of such patterns, it is not the word which makes the meaning but the grammar pattern in which it operates. It is the grammar pattern which is attitudinal, not the term *big*.

3.3.2 Semantic prosody

Somewhat similar is the phenomenon which, following Sinclair (1991) and Louw (1993), has been labelled “semantic prosody”. Though the term itself and the communicative effects associated the phenomenon have been the subject of debate in the literature (see Hunston 2007 for a review), semantic prosody is generally understood as the phenomenon by which words which are not felt of themselves to be explicitly attitudinal do, nonetheless, have strong associations with either positive or negative meanings and which may, upon closer consideration, be analysed as conveying some attitudinal orientation. In the literature it is frequently observed that speakers do not identify such items as being attitudinal when introspectively considering them in isolation – i.e. out of any given textual context. One such term is *set in*, observed by Sinclair to be almost always used with “unpleasant states of affair” such as *decay*, *malaise* and *disillusionment* rather than with neutral

or positively viewed states of affairs (Sinclair 1987: 155). Thus we might well say “despair set in” (negative) but would be much less likely to say “hope set in” (positive) or “the new semester set in” (neutral). Tellingly, if we did say “the new semester set in” it would be collocationally unusual and likely to give rise to an interpretation that we were being ironic in some way or seeking to be negative about “the new semester” in a humorous or indirect manner. (For a full discussion of semantic prosody and irony see Louw 1993.) Other similar terms identified in the literature include *cause*, *happen*, *utterly* and *bent on*.

Such terms are significant for understandings of how attitudinal meanings are expressed in that they point, yet again, to the fact that it is via word combinations and not individual items that these meanings are made. They also point to a further important issue in the analysis of attitudinal meaning making, the widely noted point that texts can be highly attitudinal (i.e. activate positive or negative assessments) without recourse to explicit, more or less stable attitudinal terms of the various types discussed to this point. This issue is taken up in the next section.

3.4 Attitudinal implication and association

The literature is in general agreement that the analysis of evaluative meaning making is complicated by the fact that attitudinal meanings are often activated in texts via implication and association, rather than via the explicitly attitudinal lexical items of the type discussed above. Thus Hunston observes:

Evaluative language presents difficulties in analysis because there is no set of language forms, either grammatical or lexical, that encompass the range of expressions of evaluation [...] In fact evaluation is frequently expressed cumulatively and implicitly. (Hunston 2011: 3)

Arguably the most thorough-going account of the mechanisms by which attitudinal meanings can be implicitly rather than explicitly conveyed is provided by the Appraisal framework developed by Martin, White and their colleagues (see, for example, Iedema et al. 1994, White 1998, White 2002, Martin 2000 and Martin and White 2005). In the Appraisal literature, the mechanisms for realising attitudinal meanings are divided into two broad types: “inscribed attitude” (via explicitly attitudinal lexis of the type discussed above) and “invoked attitude” (via implications and association). White offers the following as a good example of the invoked (implicit) sub type (White 2008: 17).

- (6) George W. Bush delivered his inaugural speech as the United States President who collected 537,000 fewer votes than his opponent.
(*The Observer*, January 21, 2001 – leader page)

This utterance has to potential to activate negative assessments of the US presidential election processes and/or the Bush presidency, at least for those readers who

operate with certain expectations as to how elections should be decided in democracies such as the United States. These attitudinal assessments are “invoked” rather than “inscribed” in that they arise via processes of implicature, and not via explicit attitudinal assessment. There are no explicitly negative (or positive) terms in this utterance.

The Appraisal literature characterises utterances of the above type as “affording” attitudinal meanings on the basis that they involve only what might be termed “facts”, at least in the sense that not only are they free of any explicitly attitudinal terms, they lack any explicit expression of other types of evaluative meaning: for example, there are no explicit evaluations of significance, degree, expectedness, and so forth. The Appraisal literature distinguishes formulations which, in this way, “afford” opportunities for attitudinal inferences from those which in some way “flag” such inferences, typically by means of intensifications and wordings which explicitly convey assessments of expectedness/unexpectedness. The following is an invented example, where “only” provides an assessment of unexpectedness and “extremely” an assessment of high degree.

(7) He only visits his extremely old and frail father once a year.

The potential of such attitudinal invocations to actually give rise to an attitudinal inference is conditioned, of course, by the presence or absence of other attitudinal pointers in the co-text and/or by the assumptions and values individual readers bring with them to the text.

Attitudinal meaning making via such “invoking” mechanisms poses, of course, serious challenges to automated sentiment analysis. With the meanings arising as a consequence of typically unstated assumptions and expectations, they are likely to be invisible to automated attitude identification routines, unless, of course, they have access to a sophisticated knowledgebase of relevant information about the norms and values which apply in the domain in which the text operates. The challenge posed to automated sentiment analysis by attitudinal implication (and in particular by “factual” assertions which, in context, imply attitudinal meanings) is widely recognized in the literature. For a discussion see Greene and Resnik (2008) or Zhang and Liu (2011).

3.5 Sub-classifying attitude

It is generally the case in the literature that attitudinal meanings are treated as one broad category not further analysed in terms of sub-types of attitude. Thus, for example, Conrad and Biber state, “Attitudinal stance adverbials also include a wide range of meanings, conveying attitudes, feelings, value judgements, or expectations; but it is more difficult to group these into sub-classes” (Conrad and Biber: 60). This is also typically the case in the computational work where “sentiment” is

classified broadly as any form of positivity or negativity (termed polarity or valence), without regard to whether the meaning might, for example, be further sub-classified as an opinion or an emotional response.

There are some departures in the literature from these trends which do need to be noted. By way of one example, Bednarek (2010), following Bednarek (2006), Lemke (1998) and Francis (1995), outlines a list of what she terms the twelve “parameters” of evaluation. The list includes four parameters which all involve assessments of positivity and negativity (what sentiment analysis would term “polarity”) but which are not grouped together under a single heading: “Comprehensibility”, “Emotivity”, “Genuineness” and “Reliability” (Bednark 2010: 19).

The Appraisal framework of Martin and White and their colleagues provides another important departure from the above trend. Their work is noteworthy in offering a more delicate taxonomy of attitudinal meanings. They divide attitudinal meanings into three broad sub categories: 1. emotional reactions (labeled “Affect”), 2. assessments of human behavior and character by reference to ethics/morality and other systems of conventionalized or institutionalized norms (labeled “Judgement”), and 3. assessments of objects, artifacts, texts, states of affairs, and processes in terms of how they are assigned value socially (labeled “Appreciation”), i.e. in terms of their aesthetic qualities, their potential for harm or benefit, their social salience, and so on. These three higher level categories are then further divided into more delicate sub-categories. For example Judgement (assessments of human behaviour by reference to social norms) is sub-classified into those assessments which involve breaches or upholding of ethical and legal values (termed values of “Social Sanction”) and those which put at risk one’s esteem in the community but which are not of an ethical or moral nature (assessments of psychological disposition, capacity and normality, termed “Social Esteem”). (See Martin & White 2005: 42–58.)

By means of a more articulated taxonomies of this type it becomes possible, of course, to provide for more delicate analyses of the nature of evaluation going on in texts. Thus, for example, White has developed an account of the different styles or “voices” of English-language journalism which relies on the distinction between Affect, Judgement and Appreciation and on some of the further sub-classifications within these categories (White 1998, Martin & White 2005). He was, for example, able to distinguish two styles of journalism on the basis of whether or not authors offered explicit assessments of Social Sanction. There have been numerous other studies of attitudinal arrangements in text which similarly relied on the more delicate taxonomy provided in the Appraisal literature. For a bibliography of this extensive literature see White 2012b)

More delicate, articulated taxonomies of positive and negative meanings obviously have the potential to provide for more nuanced sentiment-analysis findings if it were possible for them to be implemented computationally. They pose additional challenges, of course, for the computational linguist in that terms need not only to

be identified as attitudinal (positive or negative) but must also be assigned, in a given co-textual setting, to the appropriate attitudinal sub-class. Despite these challenges, there has already been some consideration of the Appraisal framework's taxonomy in sentiment analysis work – for example Whitelaw et al. (2005) and Bloom and Argamon (2010).

4 Dialogic engagement with attitudinal values

In this section we turn to the second key concern of this chapter: the mechanisms which are “evaluative” in the sense that they are the means by which authors may adopt different stances vis-à-vis the attitudinal propositions which have been discussed above. We are dealing here with formulations which have variously been dealt with under such headings as a meta-discourse⁵ (for example “The facts of the matter are that the media is lying.”), evidentiality⁶ and epistemic modality⁷ (“Obviously/Probably/Possibly/Arguably/I think/I doubt/It seems that the media is lying.”) and attribution (“He has demonstrated/stated/claimed that the media is lying.”).

By such formulations speakers/writers indicate greater or lesser degrees of personal investment in the proposition and mark it as more or as less contentious or agreed. Such formulations are of obvious relevance for those working on sentiment analysis given their concerns with tracking not only what attitudes are being expressed online but also the intensity of those attitudes and the conviction with which they are expressed.

There is a long standing tradition in mainstream Western linguistics to deal with such formulations by reference to notions of speaker/writer certainty, knowledge or commitment to the “truth value” of the proposition. For example, writing about evidentiality, Chafe states: “What gives coherence to the set under consideration is that everything dealt with under this broad interpretation of evidentiality involves attitudes to knowledge” (Chafe 1986: 262). And similarly:

People are aware, though not necessarily consciously aware, that some things they know are surer bets for being truer than others, that not all knowledge is equally reliable. Thus one way in which knowledge may be qualified is with an expression indicating the speaker's assessment of its degree of reliability. (Chafe 1986: 264)

Likewise, Palmer groups together evidentiality and epistemic modality under the heading of “propositional modality” and characterises these as “concerned with the speaker's attitude to the truth-value or factual status of the proposition”. (1986: 8)

⁵ See Crismore (1989).

⁶ See for example, Chafe and Nichols (1986).

⁷ See for example, Lyons 1977; Palmer 1986 or Coates 1983.

The early work on evidentiality and epistemic modality tended to focus on the grammar of the relevant meaning making resources, usually considering their functionality in isolated sentences rather than in the context of the broader rhetorical functionality of complete texts. In the last several decades, however, scholars have turned their attention to the communicative workings of these and related meanings from a discourse-analysis perspective. Thus, for example, Hyland, has developed a framework for dealing with authorial stance within text where evidentials and epistemic modals are grouped together with other related meanings and classified as either “hedges” or “boosters”. The former are defined as evaluative expressions by which the speaker/writer reduces “the force of statements” and expresses “uncertainty, scepticism, and deference”, and the latter as expressions by which the speaker/writer increases “the force of statements” and expresses “confidence” in the proposition (Hyland 1998: 350). (The notion of “hedging”, was originally proposed by Lakoff 1972 as an effect by which vagueness or “fuzziness” could be applied to the semantic categories referenced by noun phrases (1972: 195). Subsequently it has been modified and extended by discourse analysis theorists to include expressions which “show a lack of full commitment to the propositional content of an utterance” (Markkanen & Schröder 1997: 5).

The literature on attribution (formulations where a proposition is attributed to some external source, frequently via directly or indirectly reported speech) is an extensive one, with scholars addressing a range of different communicative effects associated with these expressions. Broadly speaking, there is agreement in the literature that at least some forms of attribution (for example, those employing “neutral” reporting verbs such as *to say*, *to state* and *to report*) act to disconnect the authorial voice from the attributed proposition in some way. For example Hunston analyses “neutral” attributions of this type as “delegating responsibility” for the attributed proposition from the writer to the quoted source (Hunston 2000: 190).

A significant subset of the literature on attribution is concerned with how the speaker/writer may indirectly or implicitly favour or disfavour a proposition, even when it has been attributed to some external source. See, for example, Bergler (1991, 2006), Thompson and Ye (1991), Calsamiglia and López Ferrero (2003) and White (2012a). This literature attends, for example, to the specific evaluative meanings of reporting verbs and whether they indicate some endorsement or support of the proposition by the writer (for example so-called “factive” verbs such as *to demonstrate* or *to prove*) or whether, alternatively, they indicate some distancing of the authorial voice from the proposition (most typically via the verb *to claim*). The literature also attends to how the standing of the proposition in the text (whether favoured or disfavoured) may be conditioned by the social status or evidential standing of the source to whom it is attributed. Thus for example, propositions will often be favoured by the text when their quoted source is a recognised expert or a person of high reputation and disfavoured when they lack expertise or are not well regarded in the community. An example of a proposition being favoured in this way can be found in extract 1, cited above.

- (8) Reputable groups like Pew and Gallup find that increased gun control is supported by about 50 % of the country, and opposed by 50 %.

Here, of course, it is significant that the proposition about how many people support increased gun control is attributed to a source characterised attitudinally as “reputable” and that this source is presented as not simply “saying” this but as “finding” this.

The approach to these various stance-taking expressions developed within the Appraisal framework literature of Martin and White and their colleagues (Martin & White 2005) differs from the prior scholarship in two ways. Firstly, Under the influence of Bakhtinian notions of dialogism (see for example Bakhtin 1981), evidentials, epistemic modals, attributions, along with concessives, negations and some additional meanings are dealt with as a single system, termed “Engagement”, on the grounds that they are all “dialogistic”: i.e. they all involve the speaker/writer engaging either with prior utterances on the same topic or potential responses to the current utterance. Secondly, and again under the influence of Bakhtin, evidentials, epistemic modals and attributions are understood, not in truth functional terms (i.e. as not necessarily concerned with authorial certainty or commitment to truth value) but rather as providing for different possibilities by which the authorial voice positions itself vis-à-vis the diversity of other voices and alternative viewpoints which always apply in any communicative event. Thus for example, modal formulations such as *may*, *might*, *must*, possibly, *probably* are not treated as necessarily communicating degrees of authorial certainty or assessments of reliability but, rather, as functioning to ground the proposition in the speaker/writer’s contingent subjectivity and therefore “opening up dialogic space” for alternative voices and viewpoints. (See White 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2012).

4.1 Computational analysis of stance taking

Authorial positioning of these various types poses obvious challenges for those developing sentiment analysis algorithms. If a reliable determination of the actual attitudinal orientation being advanced in the text is to be made, then the following are required. In addition to identifying and classifying the attitudinal proposition itself, the software’s algorithms must determine the source of the proposition (whether the author or an external source) and determine whether that source asserts the proposition categorically or presents it as more or less certain, contentious or otherwise dialogically charged. As well, as indicated above, even when the proposition is “neutrally” attributed to an external source, it is still possible for the author to covertly indicate alignment with or dis-alignment from the proposition. Accordingly, the software would need to be able to distinguish, for example, between “The media has been lying.”, “Arguably the media has been lying.”, “It’s unlikely the media has been lying.”, “This study found that the media had been

lying.”, “A few commentators claim the media has been lying.”, and so on. While there is widespread recognition in the sentiment analysis literature of the need to take into account the positioning effects associated with such authorial stance-taking, there is also widespread acknowledgement of the difficulties stance-taking expressions pose for natural language processing given the diversity, variability and co-text dependence of the formulations which operate here (see, for example, Choi et al. 2012; Farkas et al. 2010; Bergler 2006; Wilson et al. 2005). Accordingly, research in this area is in its infancy. Tellingly, Farkas et al. (2010: 1) report that in 2010 the influential Conference on Computational Natural Language Learning set “the detection of uncertainty and its linguistic scope in natural language sentences” as the new “competitive shared task” it was setting for the natural language processing community.

5 Conclusion – social and ideological functionality

As demonstrated by this discussion, the linguistic expression of evaluative meaning has provided many interesting challenges both for linguists concerned directly with communication by humans and for those interested in how computational algorithms might identify and characterise such expression. In both cases, the interest and the challenge arise from the diverse, variable and co-textually determined nature of the mechanisms by which evaluative meanings are conveyed.

Evaluative meanings are, of course, of central importance for any scholar interested in the social and ultimately ideological functionality of language. It is via the sharing of attitudinal evaluations that crucial social alignments are formed: the kinds of alignment which determine the affiliations of national and regional identity, party politics, religion, social activism, popular cultural preferences, not to mention consumerist affiliations associated with the latest new gadget or holiday destination. All attitudinal evaluations therefore are “political” in the broad sense of the term and the study of evaluative meaning making thus provides for crucial insights into how humans in societies organise themselves for both collaboration and conflict.

In the same vein, the study of the mechanisms of evaluative meaning making must be central to any study of ideology which is interested in how ideologically-charged value systems are formulated, reproduced, contested, revised and made to seem “natural”. In this regard it is the analytically most challenging aspects of evaluative meaning making which are most at issue since most of the ideological “heavy lifting”, so to speak, is done by those resources which imply attitudes and by which attitudes are negotiated dialogistically. That is to say, it is via these resources that attitudinal positions are argued for, when a need for persuasion arises or, alternatively, taken for granted and treated as “givens” when the communicative objective is the “naturalisation” of a world view.

As the above discussion shows, sophisticated analytical frameworks have been developed over the last several decades for the analysis of how language may achieve these ideological effects. While much evaluative language remains beyond the scope of computer automation, nevertheless the progress made over the last decade in sentiment analysis suggests that it is increasingly able to reach further into the more subtle, less stable mechanisms of evaluative meaning making.

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6 Understanding implicit meaning understanding

Abstract: Human communication has a unique feature: speakers do not need to encode the whole set of representations they may want to convey; rather, they can use linguistic expressions as evidence for the intended message and rely on the hearers' inferential abilities to include some extra content during utterance interpretation. Implicatures are additional assumptions communicated by the speaker in a non-overt way; they are independent from the explicitly communicated content and cannot be predicted from the sentence meaning alone. This chapter reviews the main approaches to implicit meanings and to the inferential processes involved in implicit meaning understanding, including kinds of inference patterns and attribution of intention. The role of implicit meaning in social interaction, particularly in politeness, is also considered.

Keywords: Implicature, inference, maxims, heuristics, defeasible inference, attribution of intentions

1 Human communication: Using symbols as indexes

Verbal communication is usually seen as a process in which a message is transmitted and interpreted thanks to the existence of a shared linguistic code: the sender encodes her message into a conventional signal and the receiver decodes it by using his knowledge of the same code. There are, however, a number of facts that cannot be easily explained in these terms. Consider the following situations:

- (1) [Reading a newspaper]: – There is nothing on TV tonight.
- (2) [Looking at a woman that has just entered the room]: – The boss.
- (3) [Customer to shopkeeper]: – Is this salami good?
[Shopkeeper to costumer]: – We sell only the best, madam.
- (4) [Talking about a new co-worker]: – How is he doing?
– It's not for me to say.

In situation (1), what the addressee will understand is not that TV stations are not working, but rather that the programmes announced do not attract the speaker's

interest at all; and this is in fact what the speaker wanted to communicate. The word *nothing* is interpreted in the more restricted sense shown in (5):

- (5) There is nothing [INTERESTING] on TV tonight.

Similarly, the speaker in (2) does not intend to merely produce an English noun phrase, but rather to transmit a particular, more complex message: for instance, that this woman (unknown to the hearer) is her boss, or that the boss (whom they both know) has arrived:

- (6) [THIS WOMAN IS] the boss. / The boss [HAS ARRIVED.]

In (3) the costumer will understand that the shopkeeper wants to communicate that the product the lady was asking for is of first-class quality. This is not, however, what he overtly encodes: instead of a specific answer, he provides a general statement about all his products, in the confidence that the addressee will immediately reach the intended conclusion:

- (7) We sell only the best, madam.
 a. [→ WE SELL THIS PRODUCT.]
 b. [→ THIS PRODUCT IS TOP-QUALITY.]

Finally, the reply in (4) is not merely a refusal to answer; rather it suggests that, for different reasons, the addressee is not in a position to voice an opinion, or that he is not feeling comfortable with that question – for example, because he does not want to get the other person in trouble, etc. –, or he may even intend to imply that he has a strong negative opinion:

- (8) It's not for me to say.
 a. [→ I FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE.]
 b. [→ I DON'T WANT TO GET HIM IN TROUBLE.]
 c. [→ I HAVE A STRONG NEGATIVE OPINION.]

These examples illustrate a phenomenon pervasive in human communication: that the overt linguistic signal need not fully encode all the speaker wants to communicate. The representations in (5)–(8) are surely closer to the intended message, but the extra contents in small capitals are not obtained by decoding. Other cognitive processes are crucially involved, such as those which combine information from a variety of sources, whether of a general or specific kind, with the linguistically decoded content. Whilst a language can be analysed as a complex code – a recursive system that allows the unlimited combination of symbols –, there is much more to communication than the use of a linguistic system: for the speaker, communication is not achieved as a result of a mechanical symbolic activity, but rather by providing clues of her intended message; and for the hearer, linguistic expres-

sions are but a clue to establishing an inferential causal connection to reconstruct the intended message (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995; Sperber 1994, 1995). Symbols are, then, used as indexes: this feature is unique to human communication.

2 Explicit or implicit?

The representations in (5)–(8) are thus the result of processes that go well beyond linguistic decoding. In principle, one would say that the additional material in small capitals is implicit content, as opposed to what is explicit, i.e. overtly said. This is indeed the spirit in which the term *implicature* was first coined by Grice (1975: 24) to refer to whatever is meant but left unsaid. In his account, implicatures contrast with ‘what is said’, roughly the proposition expressed by an utterance. In determining ‘what is said’, only conventional, encoded meanings are taken into consideration (together with minor operations of disambiguation and reference resolution to obtain a truth-evaluable proposition). The gap between said and meant is filled in by resorting to some general principles (cf. § 4) that explain why and how implicit meanings are derived.

Not all researchers, however, agree with Grice’s version of the divide between explicit and implicit meanings. In fact, it is easy to notice that the examples in (5)–(8) are not all of a kind. Consider (5)–(6) first. The extra constituent in (5) is a specification, or expansion of a linguistic form; in (6), a full proposition has been built up on the basis of a non-sentential fragment. In both cases, the addressee adds new material to complete apparently “missing” constituents of what the speaker wanted to express in a direct way. The resulting enriched representations are inferential developments of the encoded meaning. These are called *implicitures* by Bach (1994, 2006) and *explicatures* by Sperber & Wilson (1986/1995), Carston (1998, 2002, 2004) and Carston & Hall (2012). Bach’s term emphasizes the non-overt nature of the added constituents, whereas the term *explicature* stresses their radical difference with respect to other kinds of implicit meanings.

The main argument for considering that the representations in (5)–(6) fall on the explicit side is based on the fact that it is the representations in (5)–(6), and not those in (1)–(2) that are judged as true or false. If indeed one were to disagree with the speaker, the target proposition should include the additional material, as shown in (9) and (10).

(9) Well, there is a documentary on volcanoes in channel 17 that could be interesting.

(10) She is not the boss; she is just the manager.

Either way, the representations in (5)–(6) are one step further from the Gricean notion of ‘what is said’ (Grice 1975; Récanati 1989), but still halfway between overt-

ly coded meanings and other kinds of implicit meanings (namely, *implicatures*; see below).

The relationship between (1)–(2) and (5)–(6) is so close that some scholars (Stanley 2000, 2002) have suggested that the corresponding syntactic structures actually include tacit (i.e. non-overt) constituents, to which the addressee should assign a value. In this view, the pragmatic processes of expansion and completion are linguistically mandated. This move tries to reduce the gap between what is encoded and what is interpreted, at the expense of a more complex syntactic representation. But even in this approach, a pragmatic phase of enrichment is inevitable. Others (Stainton 2004, 2006; Barton & Progovac 2005; Hall 2009), in contrast, argue for a simpler syntactic representation and leave the bulk of the explanation to pragmatic operations that develop, complete and enrich the encoded meaning. This latter view is consistent with economy considerations that warn against positing non-overt categories when independently motivated alternatives can offer an adequate explanation.

As for the representations in (7)–(8), they are not obtained by developing or enriching the encoded meaning; rather they contain additional independent assumptions. These new propositions, which are communicated by the speaker in a non-overt way (i.e. they are not linguistically encoded), are known as *implicatures* (Grice 1975; Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995; Levinson 2000; Horn 2004; Carston & Hall 2012). They are assumptions that the speaker is responsible for having conveyed; and the addressee has to retrieve (some of) them from previous knowledge or build them up specifically for the occasion, guided by the need to make sense of the explicitly communicated meaning. Implicatures can be conceived of as either premises or conclusions of a reasoning process. For instance, the shopkeeper's answer in (3) explicitly provides the major premise of an incomplete syllogism (enthymeme), with the presumption that this will trigger the inferential retrieval of the minor premise (7a) in order to draw the intended conclusion (7b). Both (7a)–(7b) are implicitly communicated propositions, hence implicatures. In (8), the utterance in fact evades the question – which most likely will set the addressee wondering why and prompt him to induce an explanation: the propositions in (8a)–(8d) are tentative, provisional hypothesis.

3 The properties of implicit meanings

From the previous considerations, it can be seen that implicatures are not intrinsic properties of linguistic expressions per se; rather, it is the speaker, not the sentence that implicates something in a context (though see § 4.2 for a possible exception). In fact, any sentence can be used to convey an infinite variety of different implicit meanings depending on the speaker's intention and the situation. For instance, the

speakers in (1)–(2) could implicitly communicate propositions like those in (11)–(12) on different occasions:

- (11) There is nothing [INTERESTING] on TV tonight.
 - a. [$\rightarrow$ I WANT TO GO OUT]
 - b. [$\rightarrow$ WE CAN PLAY CHESS]
- (12) [THIS WOMAN IS] the boss. / The boss [HAS ARRIVED.]
 - a. [$\rightarrow$ WE SHOULD CHANGE THE SUBJECT.]
 - b. [$\rightarrow$ GO AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF]
 - c. [$\rightarrow$ ASK HER ABOUT YOUR PAY-RISE]

Another fact about implicatures is that they can come with different degrees of strength (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995, 2005). Consider again the examples in (7)–(8). In (7), the link between the customer's question and the shopkeeper's answer cannot be established unless the assumption in (7a) – the minor premise – is recovered, making it possible to obtain the implied conclusion in (7b). The question-answer pair constrains the inferential derivation of the implicatures in such a strong way that the speaker is surely responsible for intending to communicate those two precise assumptions. In (8), in contrast, the situation does not restrict the interpretation in this way, and the utterance is open to different interpretations – all of them plausible explanations for the addressee's refusal to answer. What is at issue here is not the (in)ability of the hearer to work out the speaker's intended meaning, but rather the fact that maybe she does not intend to convey a specific proposition, but rather to communicate a weaker, vaguer and more nebulous impression, which any (subset) of the possible assumptions would successfully convey. In fact, any utterance can carry strong and weak implicatures at the same time. Consider (3) again. In addition to the strong implicatures in (7), a wide range of weak implicatures could also be intentionally communicated:

- (13) a. YOU SHOULD BUY THIS SALAMI.
- b. OURS IS A RELIABLE BUSINESS.
- c. WE ARE TRUSTWORTHY.
- d. YOU SHOULD BUY HERE.
- e. DO NOT BUY AT THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER.

In section 1 we showed that human communication typically uses symbolic expressions as evidence for the intended message. But why should this be so? The previous discussion about strong and weak implicatures provides the key to the answer. By encoding one sentence, the shopkeeper in (3) is communicating not the single proposition he overtly expresses, but a whole set of assumptions –some very strongly, others in a much weaker way. An exponential growth of information is thus obtained, which definitely contributes to the economy of the overall process:

from the side of the speaker, his coding effort yields a higher number of extra communicative effects; from the hearer's side, her interpreting effort is rewarded by returning a wide range of assumptions.

How are implicatures recognized? The most reliable and classical test to identify inferred content is cancellability (Grice 1975; Levinson 2000; Ariel 2010; see section 4.1 for further criteria; cf. Grice 1975; Sadock 1978). Unlike coded meanings and entailments, implicit content can be cancelled without contradiction. For instance, upon hearing the utterance in (1), the addressee can easily infer that the speaker meant (11a). However, this interpretation can be easily overridden by the speaker herself if she adds ... *but I'm staying at home anyway*. Similarly, if the shopkeeper in (3) pointed out that that salami is an exception to their general rule of selling only the best products, this remark could sound conversationally odd, but surely it does not represent a contradiction. Cancellation of (easily predictable) implicit content is in fact a major strategy in humour, as illustrated in some famous quotations by Groucho Marx:

- (14) a. I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception.
 [→ I WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR FACE.]
 b. I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it.
 [→ THIS HAS BEEN A WONDERFUL EVENING.]
 c. From the moment I picked up your book until I laid it down, I was convulsed with laughter. Someday I intend reading it.
 [→ READING YOUR BOOK MADE ME LAUGH.]
 [→ YOUR BOOK IS WONDERFUL.]

4 Accounting for implicit meaning

In the examples considered so far implicit meanings have been listed and paired up with different situations. But why do implicit meanings arise at all? How do they get communicated? How are they understood? Pragmatic theories have as one of their main goals to provide an adequate answer to these questions. To succeed, they first have to find a solution to the problem of the one-off nature of communicative events: since every act of communication is singular (i.e. the participants and their circumstances necessarily change on each occasion), how is it possible to obtain significant generalizations, as required by scientific explanation?

Although it is true that the specific content of an implicature cannot be predicted from the sentence uttered, this does not mean that the whole process is random. We should, then, look for general principles operating on the process itself, rather than its results. This can be done in two different ways: either by determining what the specific principles that govern communication are, or by analysing how the different cognitive subsystems involved in communication work and interact with

each other. These two routes define the two most influential theoretical accounts of human communication and implicit meaning understanding: the maxim-based approach stemming from Grice's proposals, together with other post-Gricean approaches, and the cognition-oriented approach, with Sperber and Wilson's work as its main inspiration (see also Borg 2009).

4.1 Grice's maxim-based approach

The first modern and systematic account of implicit meanings in conversation was that of Grice (1975, 1989). He argued that the gap existing in utterance interpretation between 'what is said' and what the speaker meant can be explained by assuming that conversation has its own logic and a specific rationality principle that governs all forms of interactive behaviour is at work. The principle reads as follows:

Cooperative Principle: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage of the conversation at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you find yourself. (Grice 1975: 45)

This principle is further developed in four maxims:

- Maxims of Quantity:
 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required.
 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- Maxims of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.
- Maxims of Manner: Be perspicuous.
 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
 2. Avoid ambiguity.
 3. Be brief.
 4. Be orderly.

(Grice 1975: 45–46)

Despite their imperative formulation, the Cooperative Principle (CP) and the maxims are not external rules that speakers should follow; rather, they represent a set of general, descriptive standards by which communicators, as rational agents involved in an intentional joint activity, are supposed to abide by default. It is precisely on the presumption that participants are being cooperative (in this specific sense) that communication works.

The explanatory power of Grice's CP lies precisely in that it makes it possible to infer the relevant speaker's intentions. In fact, for Grice implicatures are fully

calculable at every step (criterion of calculability). The interpretation proceeds according to the following general pattern:

“He has said that *q*; there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *p*; he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *p* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *p*; he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *p*; and so he has implicated that *p*.” (Grice 1975: 31)

It is then by supposing that the CP and the maxims are in operation that implicatures are calculated. It is worth noticing that this maxim-based approach defines how specific interpretive effects are obtained on the basis of the contents of both the encoded meaning and the maxims. The implicatures in (11)–(12), for instance, are obtained by taking for granted that the information the speaker provides is relevant for the addressee (to carry out some joint activity or to take a certain course of action).

Most interestingly, implicatures arise also when the maxims are apparently violated. The examples in (7)–(8) are a case in point. In (7), the connection between the customer’s question and the shopkeeper’s answer can be established only if one assumes that, though he does not provide a direct answer, he is nevertheless being cooperative and therefore his reply is actually relevant to the conversational exchange: to achieve this, some propositions have to be added. The example in (8) illustrates how an apparent refusal to offer the information requested can give rise to extra interpretive effects, as a result of the hearer wondering why the speaker is reluctant to provide a direct answer.

The implicatures considered so far are crucially dependent on the particular context and the conversational settings. In fact, it is not difficult to imagine that different implicit meanings would be conveyed on different occasions (criterion of indeterminacy). These implicatures are therefore called *particularized conversational implicatures (PCIs)*.

Other implicit components seem to be less sensitive to the context. Consider the example in (15a), which we tend to understand as conveying (15b–c):

- (15) a. She met the man of her life and got married.
- b. [THE EVENT OF MEETING THE MAN IS PREVIOUS TO THAT OF GETTING MARRIED]
- c. [THE MAN SHE MARRIED IS THE MAN SHE MET.]

In the Gricean account, the inferred components are obtained again by assuming that the maxims are operating. Other things being equal, the order of the propositions is supposed to reflect the order of events (4th submaxim of order); and the man she met is inferentially identified with the man she married by the maxim of relation. These inferred meanings can be cancelled (criterion of cancellability), as shown in (16):

- (16) a. She met the man of her life and got married ... though, unfortunately, things didn't happen in that order. (Cancels inferred order of events)
 b. She met the man of her life and got married ... to the same idiot she was already engaged to before! If only she had met that other man some weeks earlier! (Cancels inferred local coreference of *the man of her life* and the implicit argument of *marry*.)

Implicatures like the ones in (16) that depend on the operation of the CP and the maxims, but not so much on the particular discourse situation, are called *generalized conversational implicatures* (GCIs). Notice, incidentally, that these non-overt meanings – implicatures in Grice's view – are part of the truth-conditional, explicit content for other researchers (Bach 1994, 2006; Carston 1998), who see them as direct inferential developments of the linguistically encoded meaning (and not as independent propositions). In this latter view, the resulting representation is rather that in (17), where some components have been added that enrich the expressed meaning:

- (17) She_i FIRST met [the man of her_i life]_i and AFTERWARDS got married TO HIM_i.

4.2 Neo-Gricean heuristics

A great deal of recent work in Pragmatics is a revision, or a further refinement of Grice's original insights. To avoid the methodological problems of describing one-off interpretations, most research in the neo-Gricean tradition has focussed on generalized conversational implicatures, as representing safe invariants on the implicit meaning side.

Horn (1984, 2004), for example, has suggested keeping the maxim of Quality as a general truthfulness requirement and reducing the rest of the Gricean maxims and submaxims to two more encompassing principles:

- Q-Principle (Hearer-based): Say as much as you can (modulo Quality and R)
 R-Principle (Speaker-based): Say no more than you must (modulo Q)

The Q-Principle conflates Grice's first maxim of quantity and the first two maxims of manner and it is responsible of implicit meanings like the ones in (18)–(19):

- (18) Some students passed the exam. [→ NOT ALL STUDENTS PASSED THE EXAM.]
 (19) John entered a house. [→ THE HOUSE WAS NOT HIS OWN.]

In (18), the implicature arises as a consequence of the fact that the expressions <some, all> can be seen as forming a scale, so the assertion of the weaker term *some* implicates the negation of the stronger term *all*. Notice that this is not a (logi-

cal) entailment, since *some* is logically compatible with *all*: in fact, the inferred meaning can be easily cancelled by adding ... *in fact they all did*. The implicature in (19) arises in quite a similar way: by asserting a weaker claim (namely, that John entered a non-specific house), the speaker is implicitly negating a stronger, more detailed assertion (for instance, that this was John's own). These implicit meanings – a subclass of generalized conversational implicatures – are called *scalar implicatures*.

The R-principle collects the maxim of Relation, the 2nd maxim of Quantity and the last two submaxims of Manner. It is a version of the Least Effort Law on the speaker's side. Consider the example in (20):

- (20) a. John lost a book.
b. [→ THE BOOK WAS JOHN'S.]

The use of a non-specific form (*a book*) counts as an invitation to the hearer to infer a more detailed and stereotypical relation – here, between an individual and a book. In this case, the use of a weaker form does not imply that a stronger meaning has to be negated, but quite the contrary: the less informative expression calls for a specification.

These two principles represent opposing, antinomic forces; however, no specific criterion is provided to decide which one will prevail on each occasion and why. In (19) and (20) the linguistic context is almost the same, but the principle at work is different for each case: what would prevent the hearer from applying them the other way and getting a non-intended interpretation?

Levinson's (1987, 2000) work is an attempt to provide a more detailed and elaborated answer. He concentrates on GCIs as cases of preferred, default interpretations, those not depending on world knowledge or on specific contextual factors (and hence general enough to be worth scientific endeavour). The main idea is that GCIs such as the ones in (18)–(19), which seem to arise in a systematic way, are the result of general inferences made on the basis of the normal use of language. According to Levinson, in addition to the level of sentence meaning (as linguistically encoded) and speaker meaning (as determined by her intentions), there is an extra intermediate level of utterance-type meaning, where CGIs belong. This view represents a radical departure from other accounts in the sense that implicit meaning is attributed both to speakers (PGIs) and to utterances (CGIs).

Levinson's proposal is articulated around three principles, which determine three legitimate patterns of pragmatic inference (*heuristics*):

Q-heuristic: What isn't said, isn't.

I-heuristic: What is expressed simply, is stereotypically exemplified

M-heuristic: What is said in an abnormal way isn't normal

(Levinson 2000: 31–33)

The first heuristic is equivalent to Horn's Q-principle, and is responsible for scalar implicatures, such as the one in (18), but also for other implicit meanings that crucially depend on the existence of scales or sets with different alternatives:

- (21) a. John tried to open the file.
 b. [$\rightarrow$ JOHN DID NOT SUCCEED.]
- (22) a. John's shirt is blue.
 b. [$\rightarrow$ JOHN'S SHIRT IS NOT RED; JOHN'S SHIRT IS NOT YELLOW ...]

From (21a) it can be inferred by default that John's attempt to open the file was unsuccessful. This is due to the existence of a scale *<ucceed, try>*, which licenses the implied move from *try* to *not succeed*. The implicatures in (22b) derive from (22a) by virtue of the existence of a set *<red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet>* from which only one of its members has been selected, thus implicitly negating all the rest.

The I-heuristic tries to capture the fact that minimally specified expressions tend to get maximal stereotypical interpretations. This strategy is at work in (20) and also in (17), where it makes it possible to account for both the temporal ordering of events and the preference for local coreference in the interpretation of pronouns and other nominal expressions. A further instance of the operation of this principle can be illustrated by the phenomenon of 'conditional perfection'. As Geis and Zwicky (1971) noted, the conditional in (23a) tends to be strengthened to the biconditional in (23b), thus giving rise to the "invited inference" in (23c), which speakers derive by default unless otherwise indicated by the context:

- (23) a. If you mow the lawn, I'll give you 20 €.
 b. [$\rightarrow$ IF, AND ONLY IF, YOU MOW THE LAWN, I'LL GIVE YOU 20 €.]
 c. [$\rightarrow$ IF YOU DON'T MOW THE LAWN, I WON'T GIVE YOU 20 €.]

Finally, the M-heuristic, which is reminiscent of Grice's maxims of Manner, can account for implicatures derived from the use of marked expressions. Consider the examples in (24)–(25):

- (24) John stopped the car.
- (25) a. John caused the car to stop.
 b. [$\rightarrow$ THE CAR STOPPED IN A NON-NORMAL WAY.]

The difference between them is that the latter conveys a default implicature about the unusual way in which John stopped the car; this inference is part of the preferred interpretation in (25), but not in (24). Of course, nothing prevents (24) from receiving an interpretation along the lines in (25b), but for this to be possible it

would be necessary that other contextual factors converge; in (25a), in contrast, the implicature obtains by default.

To avoid circularity in the application of the various heuristics, Levinson suggest a ranking of the principles: Q takes precedence over M, which in turn takes precedence over I. This ordering is partially motivated by the different content of each principle: Q and M both involve linguistic forms – more specifically, the existence of alternative or contrasting expressions –, whereas the I-principle, which leads to stereotypical interpretations, is linked to world knowledge. The alternatives at the basis of Q inferences are semantic in nature (i.e. the contrast arises between semantically weak and strong forms), whilst those in M are related to form rather than to content (i.e. between different forms for the same content).

The approaches considered so far have as their main goal to identify the principles that seem to be at work in the production and interpretation of implicatures. These principles are content-sensitive in the sense that they apply to utterances depending on their formal and semantic properties and other aspects of the conversational settings. This is not, however, the only way to account for implicatures, as we will see in the next section.

4.3 Cognition-oriented approaches

Cognition-oriented approaches exploit a radically different strategy: they no longer search for rules, principles or heuristics that can help to bridge the gap between what is said and what is implicitly conveyed; rather, they try to look for generalizations about how the human mind works. The starting hypothesis is, then, quite simple: evolution has endowed our species with dedicated processing devices that impose particular restrictions on how we interact with the environment, including communicative behaviour. Exploring the design architecture of the human mind is thus an adequate way to discover significant generalizations for communication.

The most well-developed and influential approach in this perspective is Relevance Theory (RT; Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995; Wilson 1994; Wilson & Sperber 2004, 2012). Their proposal is based on two specific claims:

First, or Cognitive Principle of Relevance: Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance.

Second, or Communicative Principle of Relevance: Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

(Sperber & Wilson 1995: 260–261)

The first principle is a generalization about the human mind: since our processing capacities are limited, during the course of evolution our mind has developed dedicated mechanisms that tend to allocate processing resources to the inputs that seem more relevant and to process them in the more efficient way. Relevance is

technically defined as a trade-off between cognitive effects and processing effort. This does not mean, however, that individuals should have a conscious, a priori representation of what is relevant, or a clear estimation of what the costs and benefits would be; nor is there any external, comparative measure for them. If so, how can our minds decide? This is precisely where the second principle comes into play. It establishes that, among all possible inputs and stimuli, communicative behaviour comes with a built-in guarantee of optimal relevance. Notice that this is not an external stipulation: after all, if the speaker wants to get her message across, it is in her own interest to make it clear enough for the audience to interpret it in the most efficient (i.e. quick and accurate) way (see Sperber, Cara & Girotto 1995; Van der Henst & Sperber 2004 for experimental work supporting this view). Of course, a certain speaker can fail to be relevant for a certain addressee on a particular occasion, but this fact does not cancel the presumption of relevance that comes with every act of communication and drives the interpretative process.

Given that linguistic expressions are but a clue to the intended message, utterance interpretation is mainly a process of inference to find the causal link between them. The hearer's goal is to infer what message (or, more precisely, what set of assumptions) the speaker wanted to convey by means of her encoded signal. It is precisely the presumption of optimal relevance (i.e. that the stimulus offers the most efficient balance between cognitive effects and processing effort, given the preferences and abilities of the speaker) that guides the hearer during interpretation. If relevance is given, then the cognitive systems involved in utterance interpretation will do whatever is needed (though not more) to satisfy this expectation regarding cognitive effects; as for processing effort, efficiency requires minimizing costs and this minimization is achieved by considering the most available options first. Thus, any instance of communicative behaviour will systematically trigger a general comprehension procedure that guides the hearer in the process of inferring the speaker's meaning:

Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

- a) Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. In particular, test interpretive hypotheses (disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility.
 - b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.
- (Sperber & Wilson 2002: 13)

In this way, RT tries to set a deeper, psychologically motivated foundation for the interpretive operations carried out during utterance interpretation. The principles of relevance are descriptive generalizations, or laws about how human cognition works and are thus quite different from Gricean and neo-Gricean principles and heuristics: in RT there is nothing like following or violating the maxims, nor is there any possible conflict among them that could require establishing precedence relations. As occurs with the functioning of other biological systems, communica-

tors cannot decide whether to activate them or opt out. Only considerations of relevance guide the hearer in the search for a consistent explanation. The principles are always in force, without the individuals being conscious of the operational details of their internal mechanisms.

From the point of view of RT, then, there is no need for specific rules for interpreting an expression with certain properties. It may well be that an utterance containing the word *some* implicates *not all* in a particular situation, but there is no reason why it should necessarily be the case, nor is this implicature dependent on the existence of a specific, default principle to this effect (Carston 1998; Carston & Hall 2012). Some experimental work has also cast some doubts on the default status of scalar inferences (Breheny, Katsos & Williams 2006; Noveck & Sperber 2007).

5 Cognitive processes in implicit meaning understanding

The cognitive turn in Pragmatics has brought findings in Psychology, Cognitive Neuroscience, Evolution and Artificial Intelligence to the foreground that can offer fruitful insights when combined with linguistic and philosophical considerations in an interdisciplinary approach. Grice's work represented a turning point after which it is commonly assumed that recovering implicit meanings is a process crucially dependent on the speaker's intentions, on the one hand, and on the integration of the information linguistically conveyed with other pieces of (background) information, on the other. Two main cognitive abilities are then involved in utterance interpretation: that of attributing intentions to the speaker and that of selecting contextual information and combining it with the meaning obtained by decoding. The next two sections provide a brief overview of the key processes and mechanisms from a cognitive perspective.

5.1 Inferential processes

Utterance interpretation can be seen as a matter of combining information from different sources (linguistic decoding, general world knowledge, background information) to identify and recover the set of assumptions that the speaker intended to communicate. Explaining the way in which this is achieved is the goal of a universal theory about how information is selected, combined and processed in our minds.

In principle, there are no limits to the class or the amount of information that an individual can bring to bear in utterance interpretation. However, if this is so, the interpretive process would be an "intractable" problem from a computational

point of view, i.e. one that would require a never-ending process of computing an infinity of variables. This seems far off from human processing capacities, which are known to be limited and slow. And yet we humans are usually very efficient in utterance interpretation: most of the times, we reach very accurate interpretive hypotheses in a very quick way almost instantaneously. This suggests that our processing mechanisms have found a way to circumvent that problem.

5.1.1 Defeasible inference

The word *usually* holds the answer. We know that sometimes hearers make the wrong guess and misinterpret the speaker's words: surely, this is something we have all experienced many times. This shows that the interpretation is, at most, *usually* right, but the process is not failsafe and does not per se guarantee the output (i.e. it is a non-demonstrative process). How is then spontaneous inference to be modelled? There are various ways. Sperber & Wilson (1986/1995, 1987) advocate for a view in which utterance interpretation is indeed a non-demonstrative process, but it can contain deductive chains as sub-parts. Consider again the example in (1). The explicitly communicated assumption (repeated here as (26a) combines with an implicit premise in the form of a conditional claim 'If there is nothing on TV, then we should go out' to yield the conclusion 'We should go out' by using the *modus ponens* inference pattern in (27):

(26) If there is nothing on TV, then we should go out.

There is nothing on TV.

Therefore, we should go out.

(27) If p , then q (Conditional claim)

p (Antecedent)

therefore, q (Consequent)

Modus ponens is a deductive form of reasoning and the argument is valid, though this does not guarantee the truth of the conclusion: for the argument to be sound, all its premises must be true. So, if the conditional claim is false, the conclusion still obtains, but it will be false as well.

An alternative account can be offered in terms of abductive reasoning. Abductive inferences are targeted towards finding an explanation for a given phenomenon; they are present both in scientific and in everyday reasoning (Hobbs 2004; Lipton 2008; Douven 2011). When the hearer of the example in (1) concludes that his partner is implicating that she would like to go out, he is trying to make sense of the utterance by establishing a hypothetical causal connection between the overt signal and the speaker's intended meaning. This conclusion is only plausible (not logically necessary), but is compatible with what he knows about his partner and

the current situation. Abductive inferences are quick, automatic, efficient and – crucially – defeasible and retractable. For instance, if the hearer in (1) comes to know that the speaker has got a headache, this new piece of information will possibly make him discard his previous conclusion (that the speaker intends her utterance to be taken as a suggestion to go out) in favour of a different one. This is so for two reasons: first, because the conclusion was merely tentative and did not necessarily follow from the premises; and second, because the conclusion was drawn on partial and incomplete information: as soon as new information is added, things can change and the hearer should be prepared to do so if enough evidence is provided. Defeasibility and retractability thus relate to cancellability (the main test for inferred meaning) in a natural way. The fact that an implicit content can be easily cancelled by the speaker herself indicates that this content is not a necessary consequence of the encoded meaning. When an implicature is cancelled the conclusion is discarded and a new inferential process is activated to find an alternative, consistent explanation.

5.1.2 Bounded rationality

The inference from (1) to (11) is reached in a fast and automatic way: the hearer does not first gather all the information that could possibly be relevant to the matter under consideration and then compare all possible conclusions to select the best candidate; he merely considers the first idea that comes to his mind (the standard *If there is nothing interesting here, one goes elsewhere*) and uses it to infer the implicit import of the utterance. The efficiency of spontaneous reasoning derives in part from not using all the information, but a small subset of assumptions only. This avoids the problem of computational intractability, but raises a new issue: how is this small subset identified and selected?

The answer comes from the theory of Bounded Rationality (Simon 1956, 1982; Gigerenzer & Selten (eds.) 2001; Gigerenzer 2000, 2007). The idea is that human behaviour cannot be explained as a comprehensive rational activity, given the limitations of time and of processing capacity of human minds. Human agents, however, appear to behave in a nearly optimal way, given their goals and the resources available. This is so because the members of our species are endowed with “fast and frugal” heuristics (Gigerenzer & Todd 1999; Goldstein & Gigerenzer 2002), an adaptive strategy that guides information search – how and where to search for information and when to stop searching – that is simple enough to operate efficiently under limited human capacities. In informal terms, the idea is to consider only easily available information and to stop searching as soon as a certain standard is met. But then, how does one decide what counts as easily available information? And what is the standard?

The fast and frugal strategy exploits two favourable cognitive facts. The first one has to do with the structure of knowledge. The information in the environment

is not stored in our minds as an array of unrelated pieces, but organized in networks that establish precise relationships among agents, objects and events. These structures (called *frames*, *scripts*, *schemata*) have been implemented in computational terms by researchers in the Artificial Intelligence area (Minsky 1975, 1986; Rumelhart 1975; Shank & Abelson 1977). What is important is that these knowledge structures organize the information: when processing a specific concept, the most directly related concepts are activated as well, and hence are made easily accessible to working memory.

The second factor is the existence of a threshold of satisfaction. Simon (1956) observed that humans do not aim at making optimal choices (which, incidentally, would be out of our limited time and computational possibilities), but are satisfied by choosing an option that can make us happy enough: we tend to “*satisficing*”, i.e. to selecting the first choice that meets our needs or expectations, without taking extra time in “*optimizing*”, i.e. in further considering whether there could ever be a better or an optimal choice.

Taken together, the organization of the environment in knowledge structures and the tendency to “*satisficing*” provide an answer to the question of how interpreters identify and select the particular set of assumptions that are used in utterance interpretation. The hearer will search first the most easily available information – the information made directly accessible by the encoded meanings (including the scripts these open up) and the communicative situation; and he will stop the search as soon as his interpretive expectations are satisfied. Only when the most accessible information does not yield the expected result, can the search space be widened. Implicatures are precisely the small set of assumptions that have been used to obtain the satisfactory conclusion.

As the reader will have noticed, this proposal goes along the same lines as the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure presented in § 4.3. The strategy, however, is not limited to utterance interpretation; it is general enough to guide any process of decision making and in fact has been successfully applied to account for understanding and choices in areas as disparate as political administration, justice, economics or therapy.

5.2 Attribution of intentions

Understanding implicit meaning crucially involves identifying the speaker’s intention and recovering the set of assumptions she wants to convey. But can we read minds like this? Consider the following situation. A man takes a key out of his pocket near a door. Under standard conditions, everyone will assume that the man wants to open that door. This conclusion is obtained as the result of an inference to the best explanation using fast and frugal heuristics that exploits the organization of our world knowledge and chooses the first matching interpretation. It is, of course, defeasible: there are many other reasons why a man can take a key out of

his pocket (for instance, he may merely want to know whether the key is the right one). But what is crucial to the present discussion is that all of the possible interpretations involve attributing an intention, a mental state to an unknown individual. Moreover, it is almost impossible for any of us to escape the tendency to interpret behavior in intentional terms. Why should this be so?

Unlike object motion, which is entirely dependent on external forces and physical laws, human intentional behavior is internally caused. Mental states are relations between an individual and the representation of a state-of-affairs. Positing mental states (wants, desires, beliefs, expectations, fears ...) is a way to maintain mechanical links between an observable behavior and its cause (McCloskey 1983; Leslie 1994; Frith & Frith 2007). The ability to attribute mental states is called *Mindreading*.

Much experimental work has been devoted to analyzing the existence of a cognitive subsystem specialized in the attribution of mental states, its properties and its neuro-psychological underpinnings (Leslie 1987, 1994; Gopnik 1993; Baron-Cohen 1995; Apperly 2011). There is some debate about the most adequate way to explain our mind-reading abilities: either as a matter of theorising (Gopnik & Wellman 1994) or as the result of mental simulation (Davies & Stone 1995). Recent research has shown that this tendency is an adaptive ability of a social species like ours that increases the chances of survival of its members and makes interactions smoother and more effective (Tomasello 1999; Tomasello et al. 2005; Frith & Frith 2006; Hermann et al. 2007; Schaller et al. 2007). Autism spectrum disorders correlate with a severe deficit in all aspects of mindreading, particularly the inability to link communicative behaviour with its underlying intentions and hence the inability to identify implicit meanings (Frith, Morton & Leslie 1991; Happé 1993; Frith & Happé 1994).

Is the mechanism involved in the attribution of mental states during utterance interpretation the same that accounts for other instances of mindreading? Or rather is there a specific system exclusively devoted to communicative behaviour? From the perspective of Relevance Theory the second possibility has been clearly favoured: utterance interpretation requires inferential and representational abilities far more complex than those involved in other kinds of mindreading tasks (Wilson 2000; Sperber & Wilson 2002). This is an on-going debate, for which more empirical research is needed.

6 Social aspects

6.1 Politeness

Speakers use linguistic expressions as clues to their communicative intention, i.e. they leave some assumptions implicit and it is the hearer's task to determine what

his interlocutor wanted to convey. Among the reasons a speaker may have for leaving some assumptions implicit, we have mentioned above economy considerations: if she were to make explicit each and every little detail of her intended message, communication – if possible at all – would be totally inefficient. But there can be another powerful reason for not being totally explicit: politeness. This brings into the picture certain social aspects of communication.

Consider the classical example in (28):

(28) Can you pass the salt?

Any native speaker of English would say that (28) is the normal way to issue a request to pass the salt. But is it? If we consider the linguistic form only, this utterance seems to be a question on the hearer's ability to perform a certain action. However, it is true that, like many formulaic expressions, it is understood as having, in addition to its linguistic meaning, a standard or conventionalized interpretation that goes well beyond what is encoded.

Examples of this kind have been treated in the literature as indirect speech acts (Searle 1975) or as short-circuited implicatures (Morgan 1978). The idea behind the indirect speech act approach is that performing an act (in this case, asking) can count as an indirect way of performing another (requesting). The main reason invoked to account for this kind of strategy is politeness: instead of issuing a direct command (*Pass me the salt!*), the speaker resorts to the strategy of asking the hearer whether he would be able to do so. In this way, the hearer is left with the option of deciding whether or not to comply and the request will no longer be perceived as an imposition. There is a wealth of research dealing with the strategies that speakers can use to minimize the social risk inherent to some actions performed by means of language. The seminal work is Brown & Levinson (1978/1987), where a detailed theory is presented.

The approach in terms of short-circuited implicatures (Morgan 1978) puts the emphasis on the fact that the implicit intention, though calculable, is no longer calculated: a direct connection has been created between the linguistic form and the intended meaning, with no need for intermediate inferential steps. The interpretation has become standardized (Bach & Harnish 1979) or conventional. In fact, to interpret many of these idiomatic forms what is required is not the general knowledge of the rules of the language, but specific knowledge of the idiomatic convention (see Groefsema 1992 for critical assessment). Non-native speakers could possibly reconstruct the inferential path backwards, but this is not the way in which inferences work. It is not clear that in these cases one should still talk of implicit meaning.

6.2 Humour

The examples in (14) have illustrated humorous effects related to the sudden and unexpected cancellation of easily derivable, standard implicit content. Implica-

tures have, in fact, a significant role in the account of humorous interpretations (Attardo 1993, 1994; Curcó 1995; Yus 2003; Higashimori 2008). The incongruity typically found in jokes can be based on conflicts between factual shared knowledge and the implicit premises the audience is driven to hold in the online process of interpretation. Consider the following example:

- (29) Aunt (to niece): – Eat up your spinach, child, and you'll grow up to be beautiful.
Niece (to aunt): – Oh! Didn't they have spinach in your day, Auntie?

This joke is based on the combination of two inference patterns, in which several implicit premises have to be added. The first one is activated by the aunt's utterance, which basically introduces a conditional claim 'If p , then q ', as shown in (30a). The child then combines this premise with what she thinks to be a fact (30b), to draw the implicit conclusion in (30c):

- (30) a. If one eats spinach, one is beautiful.
b. Auntie is not beautiful.
c. Therefore, Auntie didn't eat spinach.

This reasoning pattern is roughly an informal version of *modus tollens*, a rule of inference in which the negation of the antecedent licenses the negation of the consequent:

- (31) If p , then q
 $\sim q$
therefore, $\sim p$.

The second pattern is activated by the niece's question: she is trying to confirm her hypothesis about the fact represented by the conclusion in (30c), a fact that calls for an explanation:

- (32) a. Auntie didn't eat spinach [= (30c)]
b. If spinach exists, one eats it (to grow up beautiful).
c. They didn't have spinach in Auntie's days.

The humorous effect arises as the result of being forced to introduce a number of rather bizarre implicated premises, namely (30b)–(30c) and (32b), to make sense of the relationship between the two conversational turns in the dialogue.

6.3 Manipulation and advertising

The case of humour shows that audiences and hearers, as part of the utterance interpretation process, might be driven to construct assumptions they did not pre-

viously hold, or even they would plainly reject if explicitly presented with them. This can also be true of other communicative scenarios, from manipulative discourse to advertising.

Manipulation involves inducing the audience to inadvertently entertain false, or biased, representations. To succeed, the manipulative speaker's actual intention must remain hidden for the audience; otherwise, they will not accept the game. As discussed in the literature (Saussure 2005; Maillat & Oswald 2011 and this volume, chapter 25), the strategy is to constrain and control the context selection process of an utterance in such a way that the hearer is inescapably led to accept some content that he would rule out under normal circumstances. This process crucially involves the implicit premises that the hearer has to use to obtain a relevant interpretation. A very simple example can illustrate this point.

In interpreting (33), the addressee is led to accept the implicit premises and the conclusion in (34):

- (33) Only an idiot would do X.
- (34) a. All people that do X are idiots.
 b. John has done X.
 c. John is an idiot.

Manipulation is an extreme form of persuasion. Other forms of persuasive communication, such as political propaganda and advertising, represent large scale attempts to spread some assumptions among a population, in order to fulfil the communicator's intentions (Taillard 2004). One of the commonest strategies in persuasion and advertising is that of "massaging the message", i.e. repeating it over and over to increase its acceptance by turning it into a piece of shared knowledge no one will contend.

Other techniques exploit the recovery of implicit content. For example, many products advertise near-total effectiveness with the '99 % formula', as in hand-sanitizers, birth-control methods, pregnancy tests, and network coverage, among others. Apart from the fact that the advertised figures may obtain under very specific lab testing conditions only, the major problem from a communicative point of view is that consumers tend to infer that their particular case will fall squarely under that favourable 99 %, without ever considering how significant could be the remaining, unfavourable 1 %. In the case of germ-killers, for instance, people tend to accept the total effectiveness without asking themselves whether what they want to kill is a germ, or rather a different kind of microbe, or one of the viruses the product does not kill (such as *clostridium difficile*, a gastrointestinal scourge, and the hepatitis A virus), or even to what extent the application procedure (including the application time) is relevant to the result.

These few examples thus show that the implicit assumptions brought to bear on utterance interpretation and the processes to identify them are important for a

theory of verbal communication, but can also have far-reaching consequences for many aspects of our daily life.

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Catherine Davies and Napoleon Katsos

7 Reference and Informativeness as cognitive processes in verbal communication

Abstract: Overspecification in reference is the provision of more information than is minimally required for a hearer to identify an intended referent, e.g., ‘the stripy bowl’ in the context of a single bowl. Since this kind of referring expression is not predicted by traditional accounts of reference, this chapter reviews research documenting the frequency of such expressions in various contexts. Drawing together recent empirical findings, it proposes reasons for overspecified reference from both the speaker’s and the addressee’s perspective. The pragmatic, cognitive and social significance of overspecification is discussed, and applications of research in this area are considered. We close by suggesting promising future directions for this strand of research.

Keywords: pragmatics, informativity, referring expressions, language production

1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between human information processing and its realisation in language, specifically in referring expressions. It does so by investigating the processes at work when referring expressions contain more information than is strictly required (*aka* overspecification), and examines the interplay of this aspect of verbal behaviour with not fully manifest communication, i.e. meaning which is conveyed yet remains unsaid.

Reference relates to one of the most fundamental aspects of language; the fact that speakers use words to uniquely identify properties and entities in the world. For example, in a statement such as ‘I like this’, the pronoun ‘I’ is used to refer to the person who made this statement, and ‘this’ is used to refer to an entity or a property that the speaker has in mind. Even in this simple case though, it is clear that working out the referent of an expression is not a trivial matter. For example, uniquely identifying what is referred to by ‘this’ may involve a complex process taking into account the previous verbal context (what was the conversation about?), the physical context (is some particular entity visually or otherwise salient?), and the speaker’s extra-linguistic behaviour (such as gestures and direction of eye-gaze) among other factors. Indeed, in many instances of communication there will be competing hypotheses about the referents of the words used. To make the case, knowing that the speaker is manifestly pointing at a ball a few centimetres away from her helps to narrow down the possible referents, but still, which aspect of the ball is she intending to identify? The colour? Texture? Size or shape?

We may consider the fact that we do not routinely experience a breakdown of communication as a tribute to how good humans are in calibrating the use of referring expressions in such a way that their interlocutor can identify the intended referential target. As will become clear in the next section, there are rules that interlocutors tend to follow when producing and understanding referring expressions, and the study of these rules can reveal important aspects of the communicative system. As such, the study of reference is relevant to the study of the integration of information from multimodal sources in conversation (see this volume, chapter 17), the understanding of implicitly communicated meaning (see this volume, chapter 6), and the consideration of possible sources of misunderstanding in verbal communication (see this volume, chapter 24).

Our particular focus is on overspecification (also referred to as overinformativeness), an aspect of the referential use of language in which a speaker provides more information than is strictly necessary for a hearer to uniquely identify an intended target referent in a given situation. This aspect of communication is important because not only does overspecified reference affect comprehension processes, but it may also provide a window into some of the cognitive processes involved in speech production (e.g., the perception of certain features of the referent, comparison-making between referents and nonreferents in the linguistic and extralinguistic environment, and perspective-taking and the use of common ground). This chapter reviews some of the major findings from the adult processing literature with the aims of describing the incidence of overspecification and classifying some of its causal factors from both the speaker's and hearer's perspectives. It then discusses the pragmatic, cognitive and social implications of overspecification, applications for the research findings to date, and suggests future directions for this domain.

Within the language sciences, this topic spans subdisciplines of cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, theoretical pragmatics, and the burgeoning field of experimental pragmatics (Noveck & Sperber 2004; Noveck & Reboul 2008; Katsos & Cummins 2010; Katsos 2011, i.a.).

2 Overspecification: Definitions and theoretical background

When a speaker needs to point out a referent, she is faced with a range of constructions which could refer to the target entity. Broadly speaking, this referential choice may include an indefinite noun phrase, e.g., *a ball*, a demonstrative phrase, e.g., *that ball*, an anaphoric pronoun e.g., *it*, or a zero anaphor, e.g., *there are two balls*; *a large $\emptyset$* and *a small $\emptyset$* . Standard explanations of how speakers select referential expressions have focused on cognitive status (e.g., Givón 1983; Ariel 1990; Gundel et al. 1993; Arnold 1998). When a referent is in focus or highly activated, a 'lighter'

referential expression such as the pronoun *it* is licensed. Conversely, when the referent is less accessible, a more explicit form such as a definite description *the ball* is used. When a target referent is accompanied by another referent of the same type, a more explicit, modified noun phrase such as *the large ball* is required.

Restricting our review of the literature to studies investigating full noun phrases, experimental data challenge traditional accessibility accounts and support the notion that when speakers construct referring expressions, they frequently go beyond what is minimally required and refer to entities in more detail than is necessary for an addressee to uniquely identify them, e.g., referring to a target referent as *the large ball* in the presence of a single ball (Deutsch & Pechmann 1982; Pechmann 1984, 1989; Mangold & Pobel 1988; Maes, Arts and Noordman 2004; Ferreira, Slevc & Rogers 2005; Engelhardt, Bailey & Ferreira 2006; Barr 2007; Carbary & Tanenhaus 2008). Frequently studied using the referential communication paradigm, speakers have been found to overinform in both laboratory-controlled and more naturalistic discourse. Referential communication tasks aim to elicit referring expressions (REs) which highlight one referent from an array of several others which usually share certain characteristics with the target. An overspecified RE is one which contains attributes over and above those minimally required for an addressee to identify the target referent uniquely. For example, a speaker referring to a large, red triangular target within an array also comprising a small blue triangle and a large red square, as *the large red triangle* is overinformative in the strict sense of including more information than is minimally required: either *the large triangle* or *the red triangle* would suffice in this case. Intuitively, speakers do not always produce minimally distinguishing REs, and it would seem computationally complex to do this as a complete online scan of the context and calculation of the distinguishing features would have to be undertaken upon producing any RE. As discussed below, overinforming may be causally linked to a variety of processes, including a lack of comparison activity between target and competitors.

Theoretically, overinformative referring expressions run contrary to Grice's second maxim of Quantity which states that speakers are expected to not give more information than is required (Grice 1975/1989), lest a pragmatic implicature be generated. This raises the question: what do hearers infer from these widely attested types of utterance? Answering this question requires an examination of the literature on contrastive inference (Sedivy et al. 1999; Grodner & Sedivy 2011). However, there may be alternative consequences of overinforming than pragmatic implicature, e.g., speeding up a hearer's search for the referent (Mangold & Pobel 1988; Arts 2004, 2011), or reducing the risk of the signal being lost (Shannon & Weaver 1949).

Within the theory of Conversational Implicature (1975/1989), Grice conceded that a violation of Quantity-2 or in plain terms, saying too much, was not as serious a cause for concern (i.e. would not as readily produce implicatures) as violating other maxims and at the very least, might be 'merely a waste of time' (1989: 26).

However, we argue that overinformative utterances do impact on online interpretation. The psychological investigation of referential overspecification is becoming a major research thread within the linguistic and cognitive sciences, furthering the original philosophical contemplation of reference in human communication.

3 The incidence of overspecification in production

Just as overinforming is commonplace in the wild (consider the rich detail given in narrative fiction or in precise instruction), studies from experimental linguistics have revealed high rates of overinformativeness. Early research revealed that in referential communication tasks, 28 % of adults' expressions were overinformative (Deutsch & Pechmann 1982), and in a similar experiment 60 % were found to be so (Pechmann 1984). In a recent study, Koolen et al. (2011) found that around 50 % of speakers' referring expressions in their study contained more information than needed for unique identification of the target. Engelhardt, Bailey & Ferreira (2006) found that speakers not only supplied modifiers in descriptions when they were necessary for disambiguation between multiple referents, but they also supplied them in single-referent conditions in around a third of referring expressions (though see Davies & Katsos 2013). Cross-linguistically, speakers of Yucatec Maya have been found to overspecify at very similar levels (33 %: Butler et al. 2011).

One observation from this small sample of research, as well as from the broader survey below is the variable rates of overspecification found in the data. In the following analysis of representative studies, we find rates of overspecification ranging from 0 % to around 60 %. This can be tentatively explained by the fact that there are various and interacting contextual factors which impact on the choice of RE (see recommendations for further research below). It has been argued that speakers design their REs for efficient identification on the hearer's part (Arnold 2008), but lower-level speaker-oriented processes may also be at work. The following discussion is divided by proposed speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented motivations for overinforming.

4 Speaker-oriented reasons for overinforming

4.1 Lack of comparison activity

Felicitous referring expressions must not merely describe indiscriminate features of a target referent, but crucially, the ways in which the target differs from nonreferents. The act of comparing referents to nonreferents is critical in formulating REs, and affects where they fall on the cline between underinformativeness/ambiguity,

through minimal contrastiveness, to overinformativeness. Based on the assumption that speech becomes more efficient developmentally, Freedle (1972) proposed the Minimal Redundancy Hypothesis, which held that adults' REs would contain the minimum amount of features required to distinguish the referent from the non-referent. However, Freedle's data did not support the hypothesis, as adult participants included more features than were minimally required for unique identification, especially where there were higher numbers of nonreferents and feature-types in an array. It seems that although adult speakers engage in comparison activity, their descriptions do not follow in the most efficient way. As overinformativeness is more common when dealing with complex arrays, a resource-sharing account would suggest that overinforming requires fewer processing resources. Longer, all-inclusive descriptions are easier to produce due to a lack of comparison activity, especially when cognitive resources are being spent elsewhere (i.e. in linguistic production processes). Relatedly, as referring and resolution is a collaborative process, speakers can produce their descriptions in the knowledge that their hearer can indicate if the expression is inadequate, reinforcing the knowledge that a full scan is not compulsory, particularly in highly interactive discourse contexts (cf. Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986).

Pechmann (1989) found that amongst his adult sample, 21 % of REs were overspecified, and suggested that it is the incremental nature of speech processing which drives overspecification: adults start speaking before they have scanned the whole array and deduced the distinguishing features of the target referent (rendering the early part of the RE noncontrastive). In this study, the overspecified part of the description was almost always colour. Since colour is an absolute rather than a scalar attribute, it can be articulated without looking to nonreferents. Under this account, the process of generating referring expressions would first involve object location, then a simultaneous calculation and articulation of distinctive features. Thus, one potential cause of overspecification is incremental/incomplete scanning and comparison activity before articulation begins. Because it bypasses the need to undertake detailed and precise comparison activity, overspecification requires fewer cognitive resources. It also appears that lack of scan may be more likely in complex or highly interactive discourse situations.

With the availability of eye tracking techniques, it is now possible to examine the relationship between visual scene interrogation and articulation of perceived attributes (and in turn, how the conventional ordering of attributive adjectives in a particular language may constrain both the searching and articulatory processes). The literature to date indicates that lack of complete scan may result in overinformative REs, but more work is needed in this domain to draw firmer conclusions.

4.2 Perceptual salience

Certain attributes appear more frequently in overspecification. Notably, it was colour which was the overspecified attribute in 98 % of cases of overspecification in

Pechmann's 1989 work. In addition to being central to the creation of a gestalt, colour is high on the perceptibility hierarchy by virtue of quick processing by the visual system (Arts 2004, 2011), which may lead to quick encoding or lack of attribute suppression in REs. Mangold & Pobel (1988) ran a referential communication task, wherein a target from an array of 24 shapes differing along colour, size and shape dimensions was referred to by speakers. The marked target could be described by mentioning a totally discriminating feature (an attribute shown by the target only), a partially discriminating feature (shared by some of the competitors), or a totally nondiscriminating features (shared by all of the competitors). Two major referential patterns emerged: partially discriminative features were more common in overspecifications than nondiscriminating features, and the chances of overspecification were increased when the totally discriminating feature was relatively low in perceptual salience (i.e. size or shape). Thus, colour attributes are commonly provided even when they do not function as a distinguishing feature. Colour terms may be so commonly overspecified that they function in a fundamentally different way to other adjectives. For example, they are not interpreted contrastively, as shown by the lack of an early bias in referent identification, cf. the strong early effects found on processing scalar terms (Sedivy et al. 1999).

Carbary & Tanenhaus (2008) tested the hypothesis that the presence of an attribute in an array-competitor would increase the incidence of overspecified REs. Their arrays consisted of one target and three unrelated items (no shared attributes) in one condition, and another condition in which one of the competitors shared an attribute of the target (e.g., striped cat and a striped shirt). In the first, they found 11 % overspecification, rising to 25 % in the second, despite the modifier not helping identification any faster than a bare noun would (the control condition containing a contrast set yielded 90 % modification). These results suggest that the salience of a particular attribute is increased by the presence of that attribute in a competitor. Thus, that attribute is more accessible, increasing the likelihood of that adjective surfacing in the referring expression.

5 Hearer-oriented reasons for overinforming

5.1 Facilitation of the hearer's reference resolution

In encountering a salient yet noncontrastive attribute such as colour, a hearer is able to zone in on a subset of a larger array. This is supported by evidence from Mangold and Pobel (1988), who found that overspecification shortened identification time if the redundant feature was better perceptible than the discriminating feature. The utility (and thus incidence) of this type of overinformativeness may be increased when contexts are complex or otherwise demanding (Paraboni et al. 2007), and the cooperative speaker may be motivated to reduce the search space

for the hearer. Arts (2004, 2011) found that certain types of overspecification almost consistently led to accelerated resolution, especially attributes concerning the location of an object. Hypothetically, since speakers do not always know which features the listener might notice, an overinformative ‘scattergun’ approach may increase the likelihood of the target being hit, i.e. the features mentioned match the features noticed. Consistent with this view is the finding that the number of choices available to a speaker when referring affects specification levels, e.g., references to people (which vary more in terms of the potential attributes which could be used in a RE) are more likely to be overspecified than references to furniture (Koolen et al. 2011). Conversely, when arrays are highly simplified, rates of overspecification fall (Davies & Katsos 2009, 2013).

This type of cooperative behaviour is one of the hallmarks of pragmatic communication. Following Grice (1989), REs should be adequate, efficient and sensitive to hearer needs (Dale 1992). Speakers assess the common ground and judge what their hearer needs to know. In discourse contexts with minimal common ground, speakers may include redundant information to convey salience or relevance, e.g., *This is Jacqui, my boss* and to reduce the cognitive effort in resolving reference (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995).

Thus, speakers help out their interlocutors by providing modifiers which apply to more than one referent, but crucially rule out *some* of the items in complex arrays. Speakers adhere to listener expectation or discourse convention, and may provide information which is not referential in function, but in some other way communicative or pragmatically felicitous. Supporting the notion that overspecification is a truly hearer-oriented mechanism, Ferreira, Slevc & Rogers (2005) found their speaker-participants to overspecify more when speaking to an actual listener than a hypothetical one.

5.2 Overspecification as a function of discourse goals

Certain types of discourse with their corresponding goals correlate with characteristic levels of overspecification. It is not entirely clear whether this factor is a speaker- or hearer-oriented process, but in line with our general emphasis on cooperation in referential communication, we frame this factor as a means of lightening the processing load for the hearer, or at least increasing the chances of the hearer interpreting the speaker’s meaning as intended.

Maes, Arts & Noordman (2004) report an elegant study which chimes with accounts of referential choice based on the accessibility of the referent (Ariel 1990, i.a.). The framework is expanded by asserting that levels of informativeness interact with discourse goals, and a fine-grained analysis of perceptual, propositional and anaphoric overspecification reveal a correlation between overspecification and discourse function. When speakers used information to teach a hearer a long-term skill, there was more overspecification than when a hearer only had to execute

the action once. Further, when the speaker and hearer could see the same array (remotely), there was more perceptual overspecification as presumably the speaker was concerned with ensuring that both parties had the same referent in mind before going on to issue more complex commands (strengthened by Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs' Principle of Distant Responsibility 1986). Thus, in addition to the premise that informativeness and activation are inversely correlated, it seems that task demands strongly affect the choice of RE. Maes et al.'s work also highlights the role of fault-criticality: overspecification is indeed expected in technical contexts where precision is prioritised and the risk of misunderstanding is high. In line with Information Theory, redundancy safeguards loss of information (Shannon & Weaver 1949).

5.3 Apparent overspecification: Speakers contrast between current and previous contexts as well as within a given array

After reviewing the literature on speaker- and hearer-oriented mechanisms for overinforming, an important methodological consideration should be considered in order to provide an accurate picture of the nature of referential overspecification. Much of the research on referential behaviour takes an ahistorical view of contrastiveness, i.e. comparing nonreferents to target referents within the concurrent array only. Pechmann (1984) observed that REs do not only relate to the concurrent visual array, but also to how the referent is distinct from entities of the same overall type in previously encountered arrays, which leave a trace in subsequent REs. Speakers were found to stress the modifier which contrasted with the directly preceding target, e.g., a yellow flower, then a *green* flower, even in arrays where there were no other flowers concurrently present (thus the modifier would not be strictly necessary from an ahistorical point of view). This data suggests that the prior linguistic contrast rather than concurrent visual contrast takes prosodic priority.

Although historical contrast has been classified as a speaker-oriented process since the inclusion of the previous contrast is not useful as a contrast for the hearer (Koolen et al. 2011), this referential strategy may in fact be designed to help the listener. Pechmann (1984: 428) discusses holistic representations of objects in the mind of the hearer, after Deutsch (1976) reported faster locating of objects when hearers received redundant object descriptions than minimally contrastive ones. Theoretically, the hearer is thought to construct a complete representation of the object upon hearing its description, and the more precise the description (and thus the representation), the faster the identification process. Further, such representations persevere across subsequent encounters with different objects, so by mentioning (or stressing) the feature which contrasts with objects encountered directly beforehand, the hearer is implicitly told to adjust only that one feature, and to use

the existing representation for all other identificational details. Clearly an economical means of processing, the importance of this endophoric (i.e. discourse-internal) contrast was later endorsed by Levelt (1989) as gestalt creation. There may be additional reasons as to why cross-trial relationships should take priority in features mentioned: endophoric information is more strongly established in the interlocutors' common ground whilst exophoric (i.e. nonlinguistic/visual) is less so. Further, the endophoric relationship means that there are fewer competitors to be processed (by definition, there is only one preceding target object). Finally, accessing short-term memory may be quicker than processing the visual array (Pechmann 1989).

More recent work has furthered the idea of overspecification as a result of cross-trial comparison-making. Labelled by Dale & Reiter (1995) as reference scripts, previously used sets of features and values may be used by speakers in subsequent REs, even if they are not contrastive in a given array. Whilst in line with work on conceptual pacts (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986; Metzing & Brennan 2003), predictions from a reference script approach were not realised by some of the older literature, e.g., Pechmann (1989: 106) wherein speakers did not produce lists of feature-value clusters for consecutive descriptions. However, Brennan and Clark's (1996) work on lexical entrainment shows that increasing levels of specification persevere over time, even when concurrent arrays do not demand a higher-level term than the basic-level RE. For example, when a loafer was shown in an array without any other shoes, it is labelled a *shoe*, then when it appears alongside other types of shoes, it is called a *loafer*. Crucially, when it then appears within its original array, speakers retain the higher-level term *loafer*. Barr (2007) also found strong automatic memory effects on REs. In conditions where speakers had previously referred to shapes using modification (optimally informative in the initial contexts), they maintained the referring strategy on later trials with new addressees and in contexts where modification was not required. It seems speakers find it hard to revert to basic level terms once they have elevated the level of description to a more specific taxonomy. This may be due to recent memory traces overriding the more effortful strategy of audience design.

This wider view of discourse context reveals that overspecification may only be apparent rather than truly overinformative. To recap, if an analysis of referential context is restricted to judging minimal/redundant contrastiveness in relation to other items in the concurrent context, speakers might appear to be overinformative. However, if the field of view is broadened to include the preceding temporal context which is inarguably part of the discourse model, modifiers may be functioning as endophoric contrasts across time. Previously used features persevere over time to leave a trace both in the features used (i.e. modifier types such as height or size) and the level of specification required. There are long-term effects of overspecification which bias speakers to retain the level of previously-required specificity even when the subsequent arrays do not demand such levels of modification.

6 Interim summary

The review and interpretation of the literature above suggests that a) interlocutors do not adhere to expectations to be optimally informative and instead frequently provide modification beyond the minimal amounts required to resolve reference, and b) there are various factors which may lead to overspecification, both speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented. For the former set of processes, we propose that lack of comparison activity during the speaker's message formulation, and the perceptual salience of overspecified attributes may lead to the articulation of information beyond minimal contrastiveness. Hearer-oriented factors may also play a role in the inclusion of overinformative referential material, e.g., the desire to facilitate the hearer's reference resolution. Communicative goals of the discourse situation may also influence the speaker's inclusion of 'extra' material since redundancy increases the chances of complex information being interpreted as intended. Finally, adherence to previously established levels of informativeness or to specific referential pacts may also be realised as overspecified reference, and speakers may subtly acknowledge contrasting referents from previously encountered aspects of the discourse context, leading to apparent overinformativeness with reference to the concurrent array.

7 The pragmatic significance of overspecification

From the disparate factors which underlie overspecification, general pragmatic mechanisms emerge. Pragmatic cooperation is a driving factor in referential pacts, facilitation of reference resolution, and adjustments according to discourse goals. Indeed, since referring is by definition a collaborative process, it would be difficult to conceive of pragmatic considerations being divorced from the underlying mechanisms.

The central pragmatic inference generated by modified definite descriptions is contrastive inference (CI), by which hearers infer meaning about the referential context due to modification of the target referent. Referential overspecification enriches the discourse context, but rather than adding to the representation of the referent in focus, it enriches the backdrop in which the referent is placed. For example, on hearing *Pass me the big book*, a hearer generates a CI that there must be a contrasting (i.e. smaller) book elsewhere in the context, as he infers a rational motivation for the speaker's inclusion of the modification within a defined referential context. Gricean accounts of CI state that such inferences are drawn due to REs deviating from a default form which would conventionally be used (and expected to be used) to refer to a sole entity of a given type. Sedivy and colleagues (Sedivy et al. 1999; Sedivy 2003) show that in the presence of a contrast set (e.g., a tall and

a short glass) and a competitor to the tall glass (e.g., a tall jug), hearers fixate on the tall glass on hearing ‘tall’ and before they hear the disambiguating noun (‘glass’ or ‘jug’). Hearers thus engage in Gricean inferencing; they reason that if the speaker meant to refer to the tall jug, they should have referred to it without a modifying adjective in order to avoid overinformativeness. Instead, the only object they should refer to with a modifying adjective is the one for which there is a contrast-mate, i.e. the tall glass, where omission of the modification would lead to under-informativeness. In this way, Gricean reasoning facilitates and speeds referent resolution thanks to modifiers providing early cues as to the identity of the referent.

On hearing an utterance which appears to deviate from the expected amount of information, a hearer works to enrich the context which will in turn reinstate the assumption of the speaker’s adherence to the second maxim of Quantity. The context is expanded to include the presence of a contrast-mate to accompany the referent of the modified utterance. Furthermore, by uttering the scalar adjective, a speaker assumes that the hearer has noticed the presence of multiple glasses, and noticed that they differ along a scale of tallness. In the process of formulating a modified utterance, the speaker also realises that in order for the hearer to identify the intended target, they as speakers need to provide enough information for the hearer to identify the one which best fits the expression provided. This assumption is in the spirit of Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995), in that it acknowledges that a speaker will take account of the hearer’s current cognitive state. In the referential world, a hearer’s cognitive state can be partially inferred from common ground, often from a shared visual field. Thus, the overspecification of modified REs in the context of a single item of a specific type should involve greater processing effort as the hearer looks for some relevance of the modifier once they have appropriately discarded a contrastive function.

8 The cognitive significance of overinformativeness

Referential overspecification may result from incomplete consideration of the common ground which exists between interlocutors. For example, if a speaker can see a small and a large glass, but the hearer can only see the large glass, then the modified RE *the large glass* would be overspecified for the hearer. In formulating a message, cooperative speakers should acknowledge what is shared by their addressee and construct their utterance accordingly. In doing so, the speaker engages in mentalising activity. Empirical research investigating this phenomenon has typically used referential communication tasks in which the speaker’s and the hearer’s views are different, and thus the speaker has to integrate the common ground (which contrasts with their own privileged ground) before articulating a felicitous referring expression (Keysar, Barr & Horton 1998; Keysar et al. 2000; Nadig & Sedi-

vy 2002; Hanna, Tanenhaus & Trueswell 2003; Hanna & Tanenhaus 2004; Tanenhaus & Brown-Schmidt 2008, i.a.).

Keysar, Lin and Barr (2003) claimed that although adults have a fully-fledged Theory of Mind (ToM), they may not reliably and automatically apply it. They argue that classic ToM tests probe metacognitive, reflective ToM (e.g., ‘*where does she think the chocolate is?*’ in the prototypical Sally-Anne task) rather than its spontaneous usage. In a referential communication task, hearer-participants were directed to move objects around a frame. Before beginning the game, hearers hid an object inside a bag and placed it in the frame. Occasionally, the item in the bag more closely fitted the description which a speaker gave than a mutually visible object, and although hearer-participants knew that the speaker did not know what was in the bag, they often took it to be the intended referent. These results show a strong dissociation between the ability to reflectively distinguish one’s own beliefs from others’, and the routine use of this ability in interaction. It is possible therefore that overinformative speakers are behaving egocentrically because they are not deploying their ToM abilities online. Nadig and Sedivy’s (2002) results are compatible with this view, as the children in their study showed the ability to use ToM to perspective-take when they must (i.e. when faced with ambiguity, and consciously forming a strategy). Crucially, the overinformative children may be acting spontaneously, i.e. without recourse to ToM, in line with Keysar et al.’s (1998) Monitoring and Adjustment model (though see Rubio-Fernandez 2008 for a critique of these studies).

As mentioned in our discussion of perceptual salience and overspecification, visual processing and optimal linguistic encoding may compromise each other through a sharing of cognitive resources. When arrays are more complex and the number of targets increases, activation may be lower to the target(s) in question. As a result of this, full comparison activity between the target and the nonreferents may be sacrificed, leading to greater overspecification. Such an account is put forward by Koolen et al. (2011) who found plural targets REs to be more frequently overspecified than single target REs, and similarly by Arnold and Griffin (2007) who found more full NP expressions than appropriate pronominal expressions to plural targets.

In the domain of general cognitive mechanisms, recommended areas for future investigation would be the suppression of speaker-salient features of the referent, and the nature of comparison-making by speakers between referents and nonreferents.

9 The social significance of overinformativeness

Inherent in the observation that referring is a fundamentally pragmatic process is the fact that it is also a social phenomenon. Since expressions themselves do not

refer, it is the user of those words (i.e. the speaker) who refers (Strawson 1950). As a corollary the reference does not go through without an addressee. Thus by nature, reference and its implicit informativeness is a social activity. From very early in development (around 9 to 12 months of age), children are motivated to share entities and activities with others in so-called triadic interactions (Carpenter, Nagell & Tomasello 1998). Even infants' prelinguistic referential communication (e.g., pointing) is clearly a social act (Bates, Camaioni & Volterra 1975; Franco & Butterworth 1996; Liszkowski et al. 2004; Liszkowski, Carpenter & Tomasello 2007a; 2007b), a communicative intention which continues into adulthood.

10 Applications of research into overspecification

Fields outside of pragmatics have made helpful contributions to investigations of overspecification. Computational linguistic research has documented high rates of overinforming in human speech (Dale & Reiter 1995; Viethen & Dale 2006; Paraboni et al. 2007; van der Sluis & Krahmer 2007; Viethen et al. 2008). This dialogue between psycholinguistics and computational linguists has been mutually beneficial:¹ how speakers choose the content and form of their REs is not only of interest to psycholinguists and philosophers of language, it is a pervasive challenge for natural language generation systems. Such systems aim to approximate the types of utterances that human speakers produce in dialogue to single out a target object from other objects in an array. The descriptions produced by computational algorithms have made substantial progress in achieving minimal contrastiveness in machine-generated speech, e.g., the full brevity algorithm (Dale 1989; 1992) and the incremental algorithm (Dale & Reiter 1995; van Deemter 2002) but in light of the frequent overinformativeness found in naturalistic human speech in authentically complex contexts, there remains a quantitative and qualitative gap between human and computer-generated speech. Corpus-based and experimental methods have recently been used to evaluate computational models against human-produced data (Gatt et al. 2007; Gatt & Belz 2008; Viethen & Dale 2008), and further collaboration between psycholinguists and computational linguists is keenly encouraged (van Deemter et al. 2009), particularly to inform questions around audience design, interactivity, multimodality, common ground, and under- and overinformativeness.

¹ See the many publications emerging from the NWO Vici project, 2008–2013: *Bridging the gap between psycholinguistics and computational linguistics: The case of referring expressions*: <http://bridging.uvt.nl/>

11 Future directions

Research on overspecification is in robust health across linguistics, psychology and computer science, benefiting from its interdisciplinarity. Whilst production of over-informativeness has been measured and analysed across many studies dating from the early 1980s, the impact of this pragmatic phenomenon is yet to be fully explored from the comprehender's perspective. Future research should use experimental methods which measure not only the behavioural but also the neuropsychological effects of processing these types of utterances (e.g., Engelhardt, Demiral & Ferreira, 2011).

At the beginning of the chapter, we proposed that there may be multiple interacting contextual factors which impact on the choice of RE. One key recommendation for future research is to examine which factors inherent in discourse/experimental tasks invoke higher and lower rates of overspecification, as a means of tracing causal patterns for the attested rates of overspecification. One could start by examining the interaction of visual and linguistic processing. The emerging finding that overinformativeness increases when aspects of the visual display are made more salient addresses the need to delineate the conditions under which human speakers overspecify.

Beyond the scope of this chapter is the large literature on the development of reference which lends useful insights from children's use of overspecified reference to the current debate (e.g., Flavell et al. 1981; Dickson 1982; Sonnenschein & Whitehurst 1984; Revelle et al. 1985; Lloyd, Mann & Peers 1998; Matthews et al. 2006, 2007; Huang & Snedeker 2008; Davies & Katsos 2010; Nilsen & Graham 2012; Barnard, Klinger & Tomasello 2013; Morisseau, Davies & Matthews 2013). We expect that future endeavours will continue in tandem with these areas.

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Marcel Danesi

8 Metaphor and figurative meaning in verbal communication

Abstract: The notion of metaphorical language starts with Aristotle, who claimed that it revealed much more than poetic decoration to literal language, although in the end he abandoned this idea. Jumping forward to developments in linguistics, psychology, and anthropology since the 1950s, Aristotle's idea has come to the forefront and studied from various disciplinary angles. The findings are showing that figurative language is hardly decoration, but actually the backbone of linguistic meaning. This article looks at the work on figurative language and how it constitutes the core of linguistic cognition and then at how discourse unfolds through figurative structure. Overall, it is argued that figurative language is not simply idiomatic language, but part of a cognitive system employed to create meaning in discourse.

Keywords: metaphor, metonymy, irony, conceptual metaphor, discourse

*Midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace,
it is metaphor which most produces knowledge.*
Aristotle (384–322 BC)

1 Introduction

One of the greatest linguistic discoveries of all time is due to Aristotle, who coined the term *metaphor* (from *meta* “beyond” + *pherein* “to carry”) to describe a phenomenon that was known intuitively in his era, but not identified formally (Aristotle 1952a, 1952b). Before Aristotle writers and philosophers believed simply that certain words can be used to add “figurative” (decorative) trimmings to basic literal discourse and thus that such usage was an art or craft of poets and orators, not an intrinsic component of everyday linguistic communication. To this day, we still commonly think of metaphor, or figurative language generally, as an ornamental form of language, used to make utterances more colorful, ornate, or else idiomatic. But research on metaphor and figurative language generally in the twentieth century has made it obvious that such language is hardly idiomatic; rather, it is as systematic as any commonly-used feature of discourse. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980: 3) have put it aptly as follows:

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought and action ... We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.

The study of figurative language, sometimes called *metaphorology*, has become a major target of the cognitive and human sciences. The major finding in all disciplines is that it is not an option or complement to literal communication; it is the heart of verbal discourse.

2 What is figurative language?

From ancient times, the use of figures of speech, or *tropes*, has been seen primarily as part of rhetorical and poetical traditions aiming to strengthen and embellish speeches and compositions. Metaphor in this framework is defined as the use of a word or phrase denoting one kind of idea in place of another word or phrase for the purpose of suggesting a likeness between the two – for example in “Their love is in bloom” the phrase *in bloom* is said to replace a more literal expression such as in “Their love is thriving.” But even a cursory consideration will reveal that there is a difference between the two, whereby the literal counterpart is missing something in content that is implicit in the metaphor. We shall return to this aspect below.

While metaphor is undoubtedly the aspect of figurative language that has deservedly received the greatest attention from philosophers, linguists and cognitive scientists during the last century, the domain of figurative language according to the rhetorical tradition is wider. Developing ideas already in the classical rhetorical tradition, Kelly et al. (2010) put forward a taxonomy of rhetorical figures distinguishing three main groups: *schemes*, which are preeminently *formal* in nature, *tropes*, based on *conceptual* operations, and *chroma*, which involve the staging of the communicator’s *intentions*.

Schemes are figures whose “most salient feature” is formal. They can be either based on sound patterns (such as rhyme) or on sentence architecture, such as *chiasmus* and *antimetabole*. Let us examine these two examples:

- *Chiasmus*, named after the Greek letter “chi” χ, consists in a repetition of words or phrases in a reverse order, so that the repeated phrases form an imaginary ‘x’ shape: “Life is a dream ... we sleeping wake and waking sleep.” (Montaigne, cit. in Quinn 1993: 94). Some authors distinguish *epanados*, where individual lexical units are repeated in inverted order, from *chiasmus* proper, where similarly structured phrases, sentences or passages are the object of inverted repetition.

- *Antimetabole* occurs when a chiasmus/epanados also involves a conceptual contrast, that is, according to the traditional rhetorical terminology, an *antithesis*. Quinn (1993: 93) offers this famous Biblical example of *antimetabole*: “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2: 27). Clearly, *antimetabole*, while rooted in a formal pattern, involves also a conceptual component (the *antithesis*) and brings us to the border zone between schemes and the second macro-group of rhetorical figures.

Tropes (from the Greek *tropos* ‘mode, fashioning, turn’) are figures of speech whose salient features can be identified at a conceptual-semantic level, rather than on a formal level. *Metaphor* is the prototypical example of trope, but the traditional list includes a variety of others, such as the following:

- *Simile*: specific comparison by means of the words *like* or *as*: “You’re as light as a feather.”
- *Conceit*: an elaborate, often extravagant metaphor or simile, usually connecting totally dissimilar referents: “Love is a worm.”
- *Personification*: the representation of inanimate objects or abstract ideas as living beings: “Necessity is the mother of invention.” As the two above figures, personification is closely related to metaphor.
- *Metonymy* is often compared and contrasted to metaphor as manifesting a different and complementary kind of conceptual connection. According to the tradition, metonymy is the use of a word or phrase for another to which it bears a variety of spatial and/or causal connections, like ‘container for contained’ or ‘cause for effect’. For instance, in “Rome has spoken; the case is concluded” (Augustine, cit. in Quinn 1993: 53) we have the place for the authority having its seat there, and in “The buses are on strike” we have the vehicle for the driver.
- *Synecdoche*, which is seen as related both to metaphor and to metonymy (cf. Nerlich 2010) the technique whereby the part is made to stand for the whole, the whole for a part, the species for the genus, and so on: “The President’s administration contained the best brains in the country.”
- *Hyperbole*: the use of exaggeration for effect: “My friend drinks oceans of water.”
- *Litotes*: the opposite technique of understatement so as to enhance the effect of the ideas expressed: “Sigmund Freud showed no inconsiderable analytical powers as an analyst.”
- *Climax*: an arrangement of words, clauses, or sentences in order of increasing importance, with the least forcible coming first and the others rising in strength up until the climax at the end: “It is an outrage to scoff at me; it is a crime to ridicule me; but to deny me freedom of speech, what should I make of this?”
- *Anticlimax*: the opposite trope, namely the organization of words, clauses, or sentences in order of decreasing importance, generally for satirical effect: “I will shoot him down first, and then I will talk to him.”

- *Antithesis* refers to the juxtaposition of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences contrasted or opposed in meaning in such a way as to give emphasis to contrasting ideas: “To err is human, to forgive divine.”
- *Oxymoron*: the combination of two seemingly contradictory or incongruous words: “My life is a living death.”
- *Paradox*: a statement that appears contradictory or inconsistent: “She’s a well-known secret agent.”
- *Irony*: a dryly humorous or lightly sarcastic mode of speech, in which words are used to convey a meaning contrary to their literal sense: “I really love the pain you give me.” Traditionally classified as a trope, irony involves the conceptual dimension of contradiction. Yet, as stressed by some pragmatic theories (cf. Wilson and Sperber 2012a), it also involves the staging of a persona other than the communicator and of “fake” communicative intentions. Thus, irony brings us close to the territory of the *chroma*, the third macro-group of rhetorical figures.
- *Chroma* include techniques whose relevant features are pragmatic-intentional in nature. They are sometimes called “theatrical figures” as they work on the speech situation creating a particular *mise-en-scène* a staged communicative situation. Three typical examples of chroma are the rhetorical question (*erote-ma*), the *apostrophe* and the *exclamation*.
- *Rhetorical Question* is a question that is not intended to gain information but to assert more emphatically the obvious answer to what it asks: “You do understand what I mean, don’t you?”
- *Apostrophe* is the staging technique by which the speaker turns from the audience, or a writer from his or her readers, to address a person who is either absent or deceased, or else to address an inanimate object or an abstract idea: “Hail, Freedom, whose visage is never far from sight.”
- Finally, the *exclamation* is the staging of a sudden outcry expressing strong emotion (fright, grief, hatred, and so on): “Oh vile, vile, person!”

Modern scholars advocating a cognitive approach have sometimes dismissed these detailed taxonomies and long lists of figures as nothing more than “a disparate set of items” and the classical rhetorical tradition as a sterile endeavor lacking a “proprietary subject matter” (Wilson and Sperber 2012b: 96).

In fact, figures and even taxonomies recover much of their interest once we place them in the original context of rhetoric: persuasive communication. This classical orientation is recovered, for instance, by studies on figures of speech in advertising. McQuarrie and Mick (1996) develop a taxonomy of rhetorical figures in advertising in which they distinguish between two figurative modes – that is, schemes and tropes – which operate through “four fundamental, generative rhetorical operations” (p. 425), which are repetition, reversal, substitution, and destabilization. For them, all rhetorical figures are ‘artful deviations’ from the literal use of

language, in other words, rhetorical figures are deliberately designed and used to mark a text creating incongruities and “making the familiar strange” (pp. 426–427). For example, the scheme of repetition known as *alliteration* is less complex and applies a lower gradient of deviation or incongruity than *irony*, a trope of destabilization. Rhetorical figures are “the most effective way in swaying an audience” (p. 424) because they “attract and arrest attention” of the readers, they “produce a more positive attitude toward the ad” due to the pleasure and reward that people perceive when engaging in clever artful devices, and they are more memorable (p. 427). The beneficial effects of rhetorical figures in advertising are linked to the need of advertisements to motivate potential consumers to read the text to which they are exposed (p. 427).

Yet, the traditional focus on figures as *exceptional* “artful deviations” limits the scope of these studies and their potential for understanding the more fundamental and constitutive role played by figurative meaning in core verbal communication processes.

The remainder of this chapter on figurative meaning will address this more fundamental concern, by looking exclusively at the conceptual level of tropes, which forms the object of modern cognitive metaphorology. Since the 1970s, the trend in the cognitive sciences has been to consider the tropes, and, in particular, the more well established “core tropes” of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony as manifestations of separate cognitive processes, rather than as types of tropes. In other words they are now considered to be more than figures of speech, but thought processes. Moreover, many of the other tropes listed above are now viewed as subcategories under these four major tropes. For example, in the utterance “Three nights ago my cat *brought me a present*: a tiny field mouse”, which is traditionally an example of personification, is now considered part of a general metaphorical form of thought (called a conceptual metaphor, as will be discussed below) that has the structure *animals are people* (and *animal behavior is human behavior*). The term used to refer to this type of figurative expression is *anthropomorphism*. Hyperbole too is a metaphor, with a high degree of figuration. In other words, most of the classical rhetorical tropes can be amalgamated into a general framework of figurative cognition that sees them as exemplifications of several basic cognitive processes, not decorative accessories to certain types of speech.

Aristotle saw the power of figurative language in its ability to shed light on abstract concepts. How can one truly understand a concept such as *love* without reference to the kinds of feelings, symbols, and ideas associated with it? Love is thus more easily understandable as a flower (*rose*), as a botanical process (*blooming*), as a physical force (*attraction*), and so on, than as some physiognomic process. These metaphors allow us to get different conceptual glimpses of the effects and senses that the physiognomy of *love* has in specific social contexts. However, Aristotle affirmed that, as conceptually-powerful as it was, the primary function of metaphor was stylistic, a device for sprucing up more prosaic and literal ways of

communicating. Remarkably, this latter position became the rule by which metaphor came to be judged in Western science and philosophy for many centuries. It was assumed that literal speech dominated everyday communication, while figurative language was an exception used in specific situations (orations, poems, and so on).

In contrast with this well entrenched restricted view French grammarian Dumarsais famously wrote in his treatise on tropes (1757): “I am persuaded that more figures of speech are produced in one market day at Les Halles [Paris’s central fresh food market] than in several days of academic sessions”. Dumarsais’ seminal intuition was empirically vindicated more than two centuries later by a pioneering 1977 study by Pollio, Barlow, Fine, and Pollio, which showed that the restricted view of figurative language is untenable. Those researchers found that speakers of English uttered, on average, 3,000 novel verbal metaphors and 7,000 idioms per week. Clearly, figurative language could no longer be viewed as infrequent and constrained to specific types of speech acts; rather, it was systematic in language use and part of every conversation. The reason why we still think of figurative language as exceptional is because we no longer perceive its presence in the language of everyday life.

3 Linguistic metaphor

Defining metaphor as a figure of thought rather than of language poses an interesting dilemma. Indeed, as the work in what has come to be called *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT) has amply demonstrated, access to metaphor as a form of thought starts with separating this phenomenon into *linguistic* and *conceptual* metaphors. The former is a single metaphorical utterance itself, the latter is a cognitive process from which the single metaphor derives; in other words the linguistic metaphor is a token of a type (a conceptual metaphor). Before discussing the latter, it is relevant to understand the structural components of the single linguistic metaphor.

Aristotle saw a metaphor as a product of proportional reasoning. For example, in the metaphor “Old age is the evening of life”, a proportion can be set up as follows:

$A = \text{old age}, B = \text{life}, C = \text{evening}, D = \text{day}$; and, thus, A is to B as C is to D.

The reasoning behind this proportion is supported by a more systematic mapping: – the period of childhood is to life as the morning is to the day; the period of adulthood is to life as the afternoon is to the day; hence, old age is to life as the evening is to the day. This particular metaphor, incidentally, pervades mythical and literary traditions throughout the world. It is found, for example, in the legend

of the Sphinx – the mythical creature with the head and breasts of a woman, the body of a lion, a serpent tail, and the wings of a bird who guarded entrance to the ancient city of Thebes. When Oedipus approached the city of Thebes, so the story goes, the Sphinx confronted him, posing the following riddle to him: “What is it that has four feet in the morning, two at noon, and three at night?” Failure to answer it correctly meant instant death – a fate that had befallen all who had ventured to Thebes before Oedipus. The fearless Oedipus answered: “Man, who crawls on all fours as a baby, then walks on two legs, and finally needs a cane in old age.” Upon hearing the correct answer, the Sphinx killed itself, and Oedipus entered Thebes as a hero for having gotten rid of the terrible monster that had kept the city enslaved for a long period of time.

It may have been Aristotle himself who ingrained the strictly rhetorical view of metaphor in Western philosophical thinking by affirming that, as knowledge-productive as it was, the most common function of metaphor in human discourse was to spruce up more basic literal speech (Aristotle 1952a: 34). It was a substitutive, not intrinsic, form of language. This view was extended by Quintilian and other ancient rhetoricians. In time, metaphor came to be either ignored or else condemned as a defect of human reasoning.

The source of latter view is, probably, John Locke’s (1690: 34) characterization of metaphor as a fault in language:

If we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of language or person that makes use of them.

Similar dismissals are found in the works of influential philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes (1656). An early notable exception to this view is the one by St. Thomas Aquinas, who claimed that the writers of Holy Scripture presented “spiritual truths” under the “likeness of material things” because that was the only way in which humans could grasp such truths, thus implying that metaphor was a tool of induction or inference, not just a feature of rhetorical flourish (quoted in Davis and Hersh 1986: 250):

It is befitting Holy Scripture to put forward divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things. For God provides for everything according to the capacity of its nature. Now it is natural to man to attain to intellectual truths through sensible things, because all our knowledge originates from sense. Hence in Holy Scripture spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material things.

Other exceptions include the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico (see Bergin and Fisch 1984) who attempted to spark interest in metaphor over four centuries

later, emphasizing that it was evidence of how “knowledge originates from sense,” as St. Thomas had so aptly put it. Vico’s characterization of our sense-making capacity as *poetic logic* is the first true psychological theory of metaphor, although it remains largely unknown to this day to mainstream cognitive and social scientists. Immanuel Kant (1781) saw figurative language as evidence of how the mind attempts to understand unfamiliar things, and Friedrich Nietzsche (1873) came to see metaphor as humanity’s greatest flaw, because of its subliminal power to persuade people into believing it on its own terms.

Modern-day interest in metaphor as a trace to human cognition, rather than as a mere figure of speech, is due to the pivotal work of the early experimental psychologists in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth. The German physicist Gustav Theodor Fechner (1864) and the German physiologist Wilhelm Wundt (1901) were probably the first to conduct experiments on how people processed figurative language. Karl Bühler (1908) collected some truly intriguing data on how subjects paraphrased and recalled proverbs. A few decades later, I. A. Richards (1936) laid the foundations for a truly scientific study of metaphor by developing a framework and nomenclature for studying it psychologically. In a metaphor such as “The professor is a bear”, Richards pointed out that the two referents are related to each other in the following way:

- the primary referent, *professor*, which Richards called the tenor (also called the topic) of the metaphor is what we are trying to understand, describe, interpret, evaluate, and so on;
- the second referent, *bear*, which he called the vehicle, is chosen to say something about the topic;
- the linkage between the two creates a new meaning, which he called the ground, which is a kind of produced meaning that was not evident at all before the linkage was made.

The ground can be paraphrased somewhat as follows with semi-literal language: “The professor is someone who is a large, heavy, unmannered, uncouth, and cumbersome individual.” But, as Richards suggested, no paraphrase can ever capture the ground of the metaphor. To use philosopher Susan Langer’s (1948) concept of discursive-versus-presentational meaning, a metaphor tells us much more than a literal paraphrase because it “presents” the vicissitudes and nuances of meaning inherent in a situation in a much more condensed and suggestive way. We do not process a metaphor as a combination of parts (as we do a literal paraphrase), but *presentationally*, as a totality which encloses the meaning. Describing it in literal language is, instead, a *discursive* process, which presents the same information in bits and pieces but which never can cover the metaphorical ground.

In the case of “The professor is a bear”, the probable reason for correlating two apparently unrelated referents seems to be the *de facto* perception that humans and animals are interconnected in the natural scheme of things. The philoso-

pher of science Max Black (1962) came to realize, after Richards' ground-breaking treatise, that a particular linguistic metaphor such as this one is really a token of something more general. It reveals a knack for seeking out and establishing similarities among things, interconnecting them cognitively. He formalized Richards' theory as follows. In the metaphor "The professor is a bear", *professor* is really an exemplar of the more general category of *people* and *bear* of the category of *animals*. The two categories are linked to each other because they are perceived to be subcategories of each other. Thus animal vehicles are sources of interpretation for human topics. It is this very idea that led subsequently to the notion of conceptual metaphor.

Richard's crucial work opened the way for the serious investigation of metaphor within the human sciences. A 1955 study by the Gestalt psychologist Solomon Asch, for instance, showed that metaphors of sensation in several phylogenetically-unrelated languages used the same source domains (*warm*, *cold*, *heavy*), although the choice of specific items from a domain varied according to language. For example, he found that *hot* stood for *rage* in Hebrew, *enthusiasm* in Chinese, *sexual arousal* in Thai, and *energy* in Hausa. As Brown (1958: 146) aptly commented shortly after the publication of Asch's study, "there is an undoubted kinship of meanings" in different languages that "seem to involve activity and emotional arousal". As mentioned, the watershed 1977 study by Pollio, Barlow, Fine and Pollio then showed that metaphors pervade common everyday speech making it saliently obvious that metaphorical discourse could no longer be characterized as exceptional. Two collections of studies published shortly thereafter by Ortony (1979) and Honeck and Hoffman (1980) set the stage for the present-day view of metaphor as part of thought, rather than just part of language.

4 Conceptual metaphor

The first language scientists to argue coherently that individual linguistic metaphors are traces to abstract concepts – following the line of inquiry opened up by Richards and Black – were George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). First, they meticulously illustrated the presence of metaphor in everyday speech acts, thus disavowing the mainstream view at the time that metaphorical utterances were alternatives to literal ways of speaking. According to the traditional account of discourse, an individual would purportedly try out a literal interpretation first when he or she hears a sentence, choosing a metaphorical one only when a literal interpretation is not possible from the context. But as Lakoff and Johnson convincingly argued, this is the case because people no longer realize that most of their sentences are based (unconsciously) on metaphorical inferences and nuances. Moreover, many sentences are interpreted primarily in a metaphorical way, no matter what their true meaning. When a sentence such as "The murderer was an ani-

mal” is uttered, almost everyone will interpret it as a metaphorical statement. Only if told that the *animal* was a real “animal” (a tiger, a bear, and so on), is the sentence given a literal interpretation.

Lakoff and Johnson assert what Aristotle claimed two millennia before, namely that there are two types of concepts – concrete and abstract. But the two scholars add a remarkable twist to the Aristotelian dichotomy – namely that many socially-relevant abstract concepts are built up systematically from concrete ones through metaphorical reasoning. They then proceed to rename abstract concepts so formed as *conceptual metaphors*, defining them as generalized metaphorical thought formulas that underlie specific linguistic metaphors. In other words, the metaphor “The professor is a bear” is really a specific token of something more general, namely the conceptual metaphor *people are animals*. This is why we also say that *John* or *Mary* or whoever we want is a *snake*, *gorilla*, *pig*, *puppy*, and so on. Each specific linguistic metaphor (“John is a gorilla”, “Mary is a snake”, and so on) is not an isolated example of linguistic metaphors. It is a manifestation of a more general metaphorical idea – *people are animals*. Such formulas are what Lakoff and Johnson call, as mentioned, conceptual metaphors.

Each of the two parts of the conceptual metaphor is called a *domain* – *people* is the *target domain* because it is the general topic itself (the “target” of the conceptual metaphor); and *animals* is the *source domain* because it represents the class of vehicles, called the *lexical field*, that delivers the metaphor (the “source” of the metaphorical concept). Using the Lakoff-Johnson model, it is now easy to identify the conceptual metaphor in such otherwise seemingly random metaphorical utterances as those below:

- (1) Your ideas are always *circular*, getting us nowhere.
- (2) I have never seen the *point* of his ideas.
- (3) Her ideas are *central* to the entire debate.
- (4) My ideas are *diametrically opposite* to yours.

In this case the target domain is *ideas* and the source domain is *geometrical figures/relations*. The conceptual metaphor is thus *ideas are geometrical figures/relations*. The above utterances are thus not isolated instances of metaphorical speech, they are derived from a general cognitive model of ideas. Further, the model is relevant and interpretable only on the basis of specific cultural experience and knowledge. That is, only in cultures who use Euclidean geometry is it possible to make a general inference between geometrical objects and ideas. Thus, conceptual metaphors are not just extrapolations from metaphorical utterances; they derive from historical, cultural, and social emphases, experiences, and discourse practices.

To get a firmer sense of how they shape discourse, consider the topic of *argument*, discussed by Lakoff and Johnson themselves. When this target domain

comes up in discourse, a common source domain enlisted for talking about it is *war*. The *argument is war* conceptual metaphor shows up in such utterances as the following:

- (5) Your claims are *indefensible*.
- (6) You *attacked* all my weak points.
- (7) Your criticisms were *right on target*.
- (8) I *demolished* his argument.
- (9) I've never *won* a debate against her.
- (10) She *shot down* all my points.
- (11) If you use that *strategy*, I'll *wipe you out*.

What does talking about argument in this way imply? It means, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest, that we feel that we actually “win” or “lose” arguments in a vicarious physical way, and thus that our reactions will be perceived (if not felt physically) as what they would be if we were involved in an actual physical battle: *we attack a position, lose ground, plan strategy, defend or abandon a line of attack*, and so on. In a phrase, the *argument is war* conceptual metaphor structures the actions we perform when we argue and influences the feelings we experience during an argument. It also shows that *war* is a model for human actions and thus an implicit philosophy of human nature, based on a cultural worldview. In cultures where war is not the paradigm of human conflict, these metaphors would not be understandable and the conceptual metaphor would never have crystallized.

Lakoff and Johnson trace the psychological source of conceptual metaphors to *image schemas* (Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1999). These are mental impressions of our sensory experiences of locations, movements, shapes, and other bodily phenomena. They link physical and affective experiences to conceptual abstractions, permitting us not only to recognize patterns within certain bodily sensations, but also to anticipate their consequences and to make inferences and deductions. Thus, image schema theory suggests that the source domains enlisted in delivering an abstract target domain were not chosen originally in an arbitrary fashion, but derived from the experience of events.

As an example, consider the image schema derived from the experience of orientation and distance – *up* vs. *down*, *back* vs. *front*, *near* vs. *far*, and so on. It manifests itself regularly in expressions related to mood (“I’m feeling *up* today”; “She’s feeling *down*”), achievement (“He’s at the *top* of his field”; “You need to *climb the ladder* of success”; “Success is *near*”), financial trends (“The economy *plummeted*”; “Prices have gone *sky high*”), and so on. Another example of an image schema is the one derived from *ontological* thinking. This produces conceptual metaphors in which activities, emotions, ideas, and other abstractions are per-

ceived as entities and substances that can be put in containers, receptacles, and the like. For example, *the mind is a container* conceptual metaphor undergirds expressions such as “I’m *full* of memories”, “My brain is *empty* today”, and so on. A third type involves several image schemas at once: for example, *time is a resource* is built from *time is a resource* and *time is a quantity*, as in “My time is *money*”.

We do not detect the presence of such schemas in our common expressions because of repeated usage. For example, we no longer interpret the word *see* in sentences such as “I don’t *see* what you mean”, “Do you *see* what I’m saying?” in metaphorical terms, because such uses of *see* have become so familiar to us. But the association between the biological act of seeing outside the body and the imaginary act of seeing within the mind was the original source of the conceptual metaphor *seeing is understanding or believing*, which produces many linguistic metaphors involving a source domain that contains the vocabulary of vision:

- (12) There is more to this than *meets the eye*.
- (13) I have a different *point of view*.
- (14) It all depends on how you *look* at it.
- (15) I take a *dim view* of the whole matter.
- (16) I never see *eye to eye* on things with you.
- (17) You have a different *worldview* than I do.
- (18) Your ideas have given me great *insight* into life.

This conceptual metaphor has been documented across societies as a fundamental source for understanding abstractions such as *thinking*, *believing*, *understanding*, *knowing*, and the like. This finding suggests that some conceptual metaphors are universal, differing only in the specifics of the source domain vocabularies, while others may be culture-specific. It seems basic or “root” metaphors, such as linking vision to knowledge are likely to be cross-cultural. However, their extensions may not be. In English, an extension of the vision root metaphor leads to further (or derived) metaphorizing. Consider the *thinking is visual scanning* thought formula exemplified below:

- (19) You must *look over* what you’ve written.
- (20) I must *look into* what you’ve told me a bit further.
- (21) She *saw right through* what you told her.
- (22) I’m going to *see* this thing *completely out*.
- (23) You should *look into* that philosophy further.

These are not found universally, suggesting that cultural cognition varies only in extended uses of language, not in its root uses. The reason for root metaphors being universal is probably because, as Walter Ong (1977: 134) has put it, that “we would be incapacitated for dealing with knowledge and intellection without massive visualist conceptualization, that is, without conceiving of intelligence through models applying initially to vision.”

The last relevant point made by Lakoff and Johnson is that cultural groupthink is built-up from layers or clusters of conceptual metaphors. They call these clusters *idealized cognitive models* (ICMs). To see what an ICM implies, consider the target domain of *ideas* again. The following three conceptual metaphors, among many others, are used in English-speaking cultures to deliver the meaning of this concept in separate ways:

ideas are food

- (24) Your ideas left a *sour taste in my mouth*.
- (25) It's hard to *digest* all those ideas at once.
- (26) He is a voracious reader, but he can't *chew* all those ideas at once.
- (27) That professor is always *spoonfeeding* her students.

ideas are persons

- (28) Darwin is the *father* of modern biology.
- (29) Those ancient stereotypes continue to *live on* today.
- (30) Quantum physics is still in its *infancy*.
- (31) Maybe we should *resurrect* that ancient idea.
- (32) He *breathed new life* into that old idea.

ideas are fashion

- (33) That theory went *out of style* a while ago.
- (34) Quantum scientists are the *avangarde* of their field.
- (35) Those ideas are no longer *in vogue*.
- (36) Semiotics has become truly *chic*.
- (37) That idea is an *old hat*.

The constant juxtaposition of conceptual metaphors in common discourse produces, cumulatively, an ICM of ideas: *ideas are food, fashion, commodities, visual things* (recall the examples above), and many more. These are described as cluster-

ing around a target, producing an interlacing network of source domains that we navigate during discourse. When the topic of ideas comes up in a conversation, therefore, speakers of English deliver it by navigating conceptually through the various source domains that cluster around it. For example, the sentence “Your ideas are *enlightening* because they have *deep roots* and are on *solid* theoretical ground” has been put together with three source domains: *seeing*, *plants*, and *buildings*.

ICM theory has many implications for the study of communication and cognition. For example, several of the source domains for the above ICM – *food*, *people*, and *seeing* – are relatively understandable across cultures: that is, people from non-English-speaking cultures could easily figure out what statements based on these domains mean if they were translated or relayed to them. However, there are some source domains that are more likely to be culture-specific, such as, for instance, the *geometrical figures* source domain, and thus beyond cross-cultural comprehension. This suggests that there are different categories of ICMs, some of which are more common in languages across the world than others. The *ideas are food* concept, for example, is a basic or root concept because it connects a universal physical process (*eating*) to an abstraction (*thinking*) directly. But the *ideas are geometrical figures* concept reveals a more culture-specific abstraction.

The research in CMT has also shown that metaphor emerges spontaneously in childhood, and is not the result of imitation or of the emergence of some innate capacity. When children refer to the sun or the moon as a “ball” they do so without having ever heard it named as such. They are using metaphorical reasoning, extracting the property of “roundness” which they had associated with one type of referent (*ball*) applying it to a new referent that is perceived to possess the same property (*sun*, *moon*). The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962) saw this form of thinking as fundamental in linguistic development; he thus referred to children as little poets, because they make metaphorical inferences in the same way that poets do.

5 Metonymy and irony

Recall the discussion on personification above. As mentioned, before Lakoff and Johnson’s trend-setting work, this trope would have been seen as separate from metaphor. However, within the framework of CMT, it is defined as a particular kind of metaphor, one in which the target domain is an *animal* or *inanimate object* and the source domain *humans*. This kind of reasoning reverses domains in the *people are animals* conceptual metaphor (*animals are people*), suggesting that rather than a mapping between domains, there really is an interaction, as Richards also argued – one domain influencing the other in tandem, so that we see people as

animals and animals as people simultaneously. Today, conceptual metaphor theorists refer to this as *blending* (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

But there are two types of tropes that are considered separately from metaphor in CMT – *metonymy* and *irony*. Metonymy is the process by which the name of one thing is used in place of that of another associated with or suggested by it (*the White House for the President*). In metonymy the two associated elements are in a part-whole relationship with a broader scenario or domain. For this reason, CMT tends to view metonymy and synecdoche as one and the same trope, or, more precisely, as different manifestations of the same kind of reasoning.

Here are some examples of metonymic discourse (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 35–40):

- (38) She likes to read *Dostoyevsky* (= the writings of Dostoyevsky).
- (39) He's in *dance* (= the dancing profession).
- (40) My mom frowns on *blue jeans* (= the wearing of blue jeans).
- (41) New *windshield wipers* will satisfy him (= the state of having new wipers).
- (42) The *automobile* is destroying our health (= the collection of automobiles).
- (43) We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our teams (= strong people).
- (44) I've got a new *set of wheels* (= car).
- (45) We need *new blood* in this organization (= new people).

In line with the notion of *conceptual metaphor*, the term *conceptual metonymy* can be used to refer to the abstract cognitive pattern that underlies linguistic metonyms (Danesi 2004). In this case, the source domain item is not blended with the target domain, but rather stands for it in a part-whole relation, or is connected to it within a broader scenario of which both are part. For example, the use of the *face* as a metonym for *personality* produces the conceptual metonym *the face is the person* that manifests itself commonly in expressions such as the following:

- (46) He's just another *face* in our large class.
- (47) There are only a few *faces* in the audience tonight.
- (48) The company needs new *faces* to revitalize it.
- (49) I can read the thoughts on your *face*.

Conceptual metonyms, like conceptual metaphors, are interconnected to other domains of meaning-making in a culture. The distribution of the concept *the face is the person* throughout the meaning pathways of a culture is the reason why por-

traits, in painting and photography, focus on the face. Here are some other examples of conceptual metonyms:

a body part for the person

- (50) Keep you *nose* out of my personal life!
- (51) The Yankees need a *stronger arm* in their pitching rotation.
- (52) We don't hire *long hairs*.

the producer for the product

- (53) I'll have a *Budweiser*.
- (54) We bought a *BMW*.
- (55) He's got a *Picasso* in his house.

the object used for the user

- (56) My *violin* is sick today.
- (57) The *steak eater* is a lousy tipper.
- (58) The *trains* are on strike.

the institution for the people in the institution

- (59) *Shell* has raised its prices again.
- (60) The *Internet* has changed the world.
- (61) I don't approve of *Facebook's* new design.

the place for the institution

- (62) The *White House* denied any knowledge of the event.
- (63) *Paris* is introducing new pants this year.
- (64) *Wall Street* is in a panic.

Irony in CMT is delimited to the verbal phenomenon of using words to convey a meaning contrary to their literal sense – “I love being tortured” uttered by someone in pain and thus suffering. It is, more formally, a cognitive strategy by which a concept is highlighted through its opposite, its antithesis, its antonym, or some other such “contrary” structure. Irony creates a discrepancy between appearance and reality, thus producing a kind of “meaning tension by contrast.” Irony is particularly productive in satirical, parodic, and other kinds of captious language. It is

important to note that irony emerges late in verbal development (Winner 1988), and tends to be culture-specific. Cultures throughout the world develop their own ironic forms and literary traditions derived from them. This is why ironic texts are not easily translated from one language to another. The role of irony in communication is to emphasize a situation through contrast. In the examples below, the source domain of animals is used contrastively to bring out some aspect of a target domain through irony:

(65) This party is as pleasant as a *rattlesnake*.

(66) That professor is as kind as a *goat*.

(67) Your friend is as protective of your friendship as a *fox*.

Irony can be defined more concretely as the use of source domains in an oppositional fashion so as to bring out the meaning of something through a form of contrast or dissimilarity. This form of thinking is clearly dependent on context and traditions of usage. If someone uttered “I love being tortured” in a situation where he or she is suffering and is using language to bring this, then it would be interpreted as ironic. However, if the same utterance were spoken by a sadomasochist, then it would not be ironic, but literal.

CMT has led to many findings about the interconnection between language and communication, language and culture, language and knowledge. Above all else, it has shown that figurative cognition shows up not only in language but in nonverbal codes as well. The *people are animals* metaphor can be seen in many paintings that represent humans as animals, as well as narratives of animals we tell to children, and so on. Lakoff himself has always been aware of this level of interconnection, writing as follows: “metaphors can be made real in less obvious ways as well, in physical symptoms, social institutions, social practices, laws, and even foreign policy and forms of discourse and of history” (Lakoff 2012: 163–164).

6 Figurative language and communication

The research in CMT has also been showing that conversations of all kinds are guided by figurative cognition. In this model of language, communication can be defined as a navigation through networks of source domains that are linked through associative cognition – the emphasis of utterances may be metaphorical (blending), metonymic (part-whole), or ironic (contrastive). The utterance can, of course, be literal, but in this model literal speech is actually rare and occurs typically in discourses that require it (science, technology, and so on), but in very specific ways. Moreover, CMT interconnects communication with culture. Western courtship rituals, for example, reflect the *love is a sweetness* conceptual metaphor

(“She’s my *sweetheart*”, “I love my *honey*”, and so on) in nonverbal ways: sweets are given to a loved one on St. Valentine’s day; matrimonial love is symbolized at a wedding ceremony by the eating of a cake; we sweeten our breath with candy before kissing our romantic partners; and so on. Emantian (1995) documented similarities in the ways in which romance is metaphorized and spoken about in Chagga, a Bantu language and culture of Tanzania, where the same concept manifests itself regularly. In Chagga the man is perceived to be the eater and the woman his *sweet food*, as can be detected in expressions that mean, in translated form, “Does she taste sweet?”, “She tastes sweet as sugar honey” (Emantian 1995: 168).

More often than not, metaphors and metonyms are guides to a culture’s past and thus manifest themselves in everyday proverbial or colloquial speech. A common expression such as “He has fallen from grace” would have been recognized instantly in a previous era as referring to the Adam and Eve story in the Bible. Today we continue to use it with only a dim awareness (if any) of its Biblical origins. Expressions that portray *life as a metaphorical journey* – “I’m still a long way from my goal”; “There is no end in sight”; and so on – are similarly rooted in Biblical narrative. As the literary critic Northrop Frye (1981) aptly pointed out, one cannot penetrate such expressions, or indeed most of Western literature or art, without having been exposed, directly or indirectly, to the original Biblical stories. These provide the source domains for many of the concepts we use today for judging human actions and offering advice, bestowing upon everyday life and conversation a kind of implicit metaphysical meaning and value.

Proverbs are, in effect, historical or root conceptual metaphors that people employ unconsciously to provide sound practical advice when it is required in certain situations:

- (68) You’ve got too many fires burning (= advice to not do so many things at once).
- (69) Rome wasn’t built in a day (= advice to have patience).
- (70) Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched (= advice to be cautious).
- (71) An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (= equal treatment is required in love and war).

Every culture has its proverbs, aphorisms, and sayings. They constitute a remarkable code of ethics and of practical knowledge that anthropologists call “folk wisdom”. Indeed, the very concept of *wisdom* implies the ability to apply proverbial language insightfully to a situation. Preaching, too, would hardly be persuasive if it were not embedded in the proverbial practices of a culture. An effective preacher is one who knows how to structure his or her oration around a few highly understandable conceptual metaphors such as *adultery is punishable by fire*. These guide the preacher’s selection of words, illustrations, turns of phrase, practical examples – “You must cleanse your soul of the filth of sex”; “You will burn in Hell, if you do not clean up your act”; and so on and so forth.

Words in isolation have referential meaning. A word such as *cat* refers to a particular kind of mammal. It is when we use words in combination (in phrases, sentences, utterances) that figuration comes into play. So, rarely do we use *cat* literally, unless we are explaining what a *cat* is: “A cat is a feline mammal”. Generally when words are combined into larger structures, figurative cognition enters into play: “He walks like a *cat*”; “My friend is a cool *cat*”; and so on. Whereas individual words or linguistic categories (prepositions, articles, and so on) create referential domains for humans to reflect upon, utilize, and store as knowledge units, figuration is the strategy we use to interconnect such domains into increasingly layered orders of meaning – layers upon layers of source domains. One source domain suggests another, which suggests another, and so on. The central feature of human thinking is the fluid application of existing concepts to new situations. Communication is thus an implementation of this kind of thinking and its content can be accessed only if the interlocutors have access to the same networks or ICMs.

The domain in which figurative cognition manifests itself most saliently is in discourse. Discourse is *intertextual* and *interdiscursive* (Bakhtin 1981, 1986, 1993) because it has network structure – one source domain connected to another, and so on – directly or indirectly impelling interlocutors to cite or allude to previous texts and discourses – speech, symbols, rituals, and so on through some form of connectivity (imitation, presupposition, rejoinder, critique, parody). A close look at discourse data will, in fact, show the presence of figuration and its basis in source domains in terms of allusions, cross-references, and other connecting devices. Roman Jakobson (1960) also saw figurative cognition as shaping the internal structures of communication into pliable entities that respond to external social situations. This line of thought has recently found expression in a theory that, as mentioned, has come to be known as blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). In this framework, a blend is formed when the brain identifies distinct entities in different neural regions or maps as the same entity in another neural map. Together they constitute the blend. In the metaphor “That mathematician is a rock”, the two distinct entities are “the mathematician” and “the rock”. The blending process is guided by the inference that *people are substances*, constituting the final touch to the blend – a touch that keeps the two entities distinct in different neural maps, while identifying them simultaneously as a single entity in the third map. To put it another way, the connection between the conceptual metaphor, *people are substances* and the neural space required to apply it specifically constitutes the substratum of the blend.

In sum, there is no human discourse without figuration. Without the network of source domains (metaphorical, metonymic, ironic) that make utterances cohere semantically, culturally, and conceptually, all that would be left is exchange of literal information, much like the computer-based exchanges of artificial languages. Human information exchange is governed by the neural pathways that

blend together during speech to produce meaning that is “grounded” in images of the world that come through metaphor, metonymy, and irony. These not only allow us to interpret the information, but to evaluate it and make sense of it on our own terms.

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III. Conversation, dialogue and mutual understanding

Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni¹

9 Conversation and interaction

Abstract: In an interactionist perspective, communication is no longer conceived of as a transfer of information from an encoding subject to a decoding recipient but as a process of co-construction implying constant re-adjustments between participants. Initially anchored in sociology, this approach envisages the various types of discourse as socially situated practices however without overlooking its cognitive aspects. In this chapter, we first give an overview of the trends of research that inspired the analysis of verbal interactions (Goffmanian sociology, ethnography of communication, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, interactionist psychology and Relevance theory). Then we turn to a number of methodological issues raised by this approach, such as the nature of data, the way the context should be handled and how the relevant units are to be separated from each other. Two types of communicative interactions illustrate these problems in this chapter: exchanges in small independent shops in France and TV-broadcasted political debates.

Keywords: context, TV debates, communicative interactions

1 Introduction

Whereas one may well follow Gumperz (1996: 374) in assuming that “research on verbal communication since the 1960s has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of how language works in everyday encounters”, the reverse can be held as well: research on how language works in everyday encounters has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of verbal communication. Since decades, under the influence of Erving Goffman and Harvey Sacks, the study of communication has merged to a large extent with that of real exchanges in everyday situations, that is, with the study of verbal interactions (their most ‘ordinary’ type being conversations).

In a very general way, the concept of *interaction* refers to the action that two (or more) objects or phenomena perform on one another. It is a somehow ‘nomadic’ concept, which appeared initially in natural and life sciences and was adopted later in the humanities, starting from the second half of the twentieth century, in order to describe *communicative interactions*. Yet regardless of whether it’s about physical particles or human beings, we are talking about a *system of mutual influences*. In the case of verbal interactions, these influences arise by means of lan-

¹ Translated from French by Louis de Saussure.

guage. Hence, the word ‘interaction’, which was originally about *processes* of actions and reactions, came to refer to the communicative events themselves through a metonymic lexical change, communicative events being by excellence the scene where these mutual influences occur:

“For the purpose of this report, interaction (that is, face-to-face interaction) may be roughly defined as the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence. *An interaction* may be defined as all the interaction which occurs throughout any one occasion when a given set of individuals are in one another’s continuous presence; the term ‘an encounter’ would do as well.” (Goffman 1959: 15)

When conceived of as interaction, communication bears the following properties:

- (i) It is a reciprocal process: not only do the participants intervene each at their turn, but at every time the one holding the position of hearer has an obligation to ensure the constant maintenance of the communication circuit through the production of verbal and non verbal signals of listening (‘back channelling’). More broadly, the various participants have to coordinate their behaviour along the verbal exchange in order to build up in common this particular object, an interactional sample, which is then the result of a collaborative work (an ‘interactional achievement’, Schegloff 1982).
- (ii) This process aims not only at exchanging information and thus at modifying the cognitive system of the participants but also at orienting their behaviour. In a classroom or in a meeting room, in a shop or in a workshop, the circulation of information is inextricably related to the coordination of the actions performed by each participant. This pragmatic, or ‘praxeological’, conception of communication finds its roots in the theory of Speech Acts founded by John Austin (1962), which is reassessed in an interactional perspective.
- (iii) Communication so envisaged develops upon a set of knowledge and know-hows that the participants can mobilize in the situation where they stand. This set forms their global *communicative competence* (see 2.1.2 below), which involves not only the knowledge of the language in which the exchange is made (together with the kinetic units that supplement the verbal signs, since oral interactions are ‘multimodal’) but also the knowledge of all sorts of principles and rules at play at the various levels at which interactions work, such as the alternation of turns, the sequence of replies, the management of topics, the management of interpersonal relations (itself in turn implying the command of the system of politeness and of ritual constraints), etc. Scholars studying interaction generally start from the assumption that human beings are significantly different from one another and that they each have a different personal cognitive equipment; therefore, admittedly, these competences are partly ‘malleable’, that is, they can be adapted to the infinite variety of interlocutors and of situations of interlocation. The co-construction of interaction can only happen at the cost of constant ‘negotiations’, and all components

of interaction can be negotiated in the course of its occurrence (cf. Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005).

- (iv) In contrast with the purely codic conception of communication (i.e. a sender and a recipient exchange information *via* a common language which permits its coding and decoding), the interactionist will grant a primordial importance to the context, both narrow and large, in which the utterances exchanged inscribe themselves, and insist on their property of being *socially situated*. It is not surprising, then, that this new way of looking at communicative phenomena was mostly adopted, initially, by scholars in the field of sociology.

2 Social aspects

2.1 Historical overview

Being interdisciplinary since its beginning, the interactionist approach to communication initially found its theoretical methodological consistency within American sociology, in line with the works of the Chicago school on symbolic interactionism and of Alfred Schütz in phenomenological sociology. This vast field of research is made of numerous trends, among which the following main perspectives deserve specific mention.

2.1.1 Erving Goffman

Goffman is a solitary and independent-minded scholar and he doesn't really belong to a specific research trend. Nonetheless, he dramatically influenced the way scholars think of everyday interactions. He conceived of them as kinds of theatrical performances, in which the participants seek above all to save and manage their mutual faces (this view is further developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, who propose a full-fledged theory of politeness seen as 'face-work' Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987). Goffman's import about the 'presentation of the self', 'interaction rituals' and the various modes of participation and commitment in encounters is considerable (Goffman 1959, 1967). According to Duncan & Fiske (1985: 68), "No other investigator has so compellingly illuminated the subtlety and complexity of interactional processes".

2.1.2 Ethnography of communication

Reacting against the Chomskyan conception of the 'ideal speaker', Hymes (1962) publishes a paper titled *The Ethnography of Speaking* where he claims that speech

is, above all, a communicative process to be studied in its context as ethnographers do. Together with Gumperz and other colleagues, Hymes establishes the foundations of a new discipline, 'ethnography of communication', whose objective is to uncover the set of norms which underlie the way in which the various types of interactions seen in human societies work. The main characteristics of this trend are:

- (i) an extension of the concept of 'competence' to 'communicative competence', linguistic competence being only one component, among others, of communicative competence;
- (ii) the importance granted to the context, both physical and socio-cultural: communicative norms and discursive practices are always to be envisaged in relation to the 'frame' and the 'site' where they take place (Hymes' *SPEAKING* model inventories the various components of the context: 'setting', 'participants', 'ends', 'acts', 'key', 'instrumentalities', 'norms' and 'genre');
- (iii) The commitment to an inductive, empirical and naturalistic approach. Speech events are in his view to be observed in their natural environment and the analyses must be based on patient fieldwork.
- (iv) A special attention is given to phenomena of variation, not only between speech events but also between various discursive communities (in a cross-cultural view) and between groups within these communities (sub-cultural variations).

2.1.3 Ethnomethodology and Conversation analysis

For Harold Garfinkel, the founder of ethnomethodology and inventor of the term, ethnomethodology pursues the objective of describing the 'methods' (i.e. procedures, types of knowledge and know-hows) that are used by members of a given society in order to adequately manage all the communicative problems that they need to solve in their everyday life (Garfinkel 1967). In this perspective, the norms that underlie social behaviour are constantly refreshed and regenerated in everyday practice within the endless movement of the interactive construction of social order; life in society appears thus as a 'continuous achievement. The ethnomethodological approach applies in principle to all domains of social life. But conversations appear as a privileged place to observe this phenomenon because they appear as a sort of micro social system on their own. With the impulse of Sacks' 'lectures on conversation' (delivered from 1964 to 1972 but published only posthumously in 1992 under the direction of Gail Jefferson), a school of ethnomethodology focused on talk-in-interaction and became an autonomous field of research, namely 'conversation analysis' (CA). Their goal is to show that ordinary conversations are organized, and to detail very precisely how they are so, showing how participants make use of specific techniques in order to accomplish in common the various tasks they

have to perform: ensure turn-taking with minimizing gaps and overlaps (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974), repair the occasional problems in the exchange, achieve the negotiation of topics and of conversations openings and closings, lead together a narration or a description, etc. The objective is thus to show the ‘technology’ of talk-in-interaction through the cautious observation of carefully recorded and transcribed samples.

2.2 Interaction and social context

These various perspectives have in common that they view discourses as socially situated practices and that they consider the relation between discourse and context as a dynamic one. Of course, every discursive event involves certain ‘ways of speaking’. From the point of view of its production, the speaker mobilizes a load of knowledge that allows him to “communicate effectively in culturally different settings” (Gumperz & Hymes 1972: vi); from the point of view of reception, the interlocutor will make use of the same array of knowledge in order to interpret the utterances submitted to him. Yet he may also extract from the very text of the interaction those relevant contextual assumptions which he didn’t previously hold, thanks to what Gumperz (1982a) calls *contextualisation cues*. The context must therefore not be understood as a fixed frame within which the discourse would unfold, but is on the contrary constantly remodelled by the talk-in-interaction. In this view, the discourse is an activity both conditioned by the context and transformative of it; existing prior to the interaction, the situation is permanently *redefined* by the conversational events: “Context shapes language and language shapes context. [...] Context is not simply a constraint on language, but also a product of language use.” (Duranti & Goodwin 1992: 30–1).

The idea that discourse fashions the context as much as the context fashions discourse is a leitmotiv in today’s interactionist literature. It can be illustrated by the example of the selection of the pronoun *tu* or *vous* (casual and formal forms for *you*) when addressing someone in French: the choice is dictated by the state of the relationship between the interactants when the exchange takes place and by various situational factors. However as the rules determining the use of *tu* and *vous* are somewhat unclear in some cases, the speaker can occasionally try to modify the relationship, for example in tempting to come closer to the partner by switching from *vous* to *tu*. In most cases, nonetheless, the discourse’s latitude to remodel the context is relatively small and the choice of the pronoun is very strongly constrained by the situation of communication. Thus, the possibilities of remodelling discourse are in fact relative and their amplitude varies from one type of discourse to the other, and from one kind of linguistic phenomenon to the other. Everything is not equally ‘negotiable’ in interaction.

Let us add that the particular importance given to the context in this framework however resulted in a renewed interest for issues such as:

- (i) the question of *interaction types* which can be described according to a number of oppositions (the nature of the participative framework (Goffman 1981), the exchange's objectives, its degree of formality, etc.); it is assumed that each type unfolds according to a 'script', more or less rigid or flexible, which corresponds to the succession of the activities that compose the communicative event, in relation with the 'roles' involved:

"A script is a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context. [...] Thus, a script is a predetermined stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation. [...] Every script has associated with it a number of roles." (Schank & Abelson 1977: 41)

If at the beginning Conversational Analysis (henceforth CA) widely privileged ordinary conversations, which are considered the basic form of verbal interactions in general, it directed later its attention towards more formal and institutional forms of talk-in-interaction. The literature about, for example, interactions in classrooms, commercial and service settings, medical contexts, clinical and therapeutic exchanges, judiciary and parliamentary contexts, or within the realm of media interaction, is today wide.

- (ii) the question of the participants' *identities* and their *socio-affective relation* (notably their relation of power). These identities and relations, as all other components of interaction, are partly determined by the context and partly (re)constructed and negotiated along the flow of the exchange (Gumperz 1982b; Thornborrow 2002).

3 Cognitive aspects

The co-construction of interaction by the participants forces them to take into account the narrow context (the situation of communication) and the wide context (socio-cultural context); but it also implies a cognitive work in order to achieve the operations of online production and interpretation of the semiotic material that gets exchanged in the course of the interaction. This cognitive work is achieved by mobilizing the participants' 'competences', that is, procedural knowledge which allows them to perform these operations successfully. Some approaches focus specifically on these cognitive processes which underlie verbal and non verbal activities conducted by the individuals engaged in such collective tasks. We take here the example of two such approaches which emerged and were developed within very different contexts and seek to achieve different aims.

3.1 The Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto

Following the legacy of Gregory Bateson, a group of scholars in California developed a theory of communication mostly intended to solve some problems of patho-

logical communication, with the assumption that these impairments result from a circular causality involving a malfunction of the global relational system within which the individual is inscribed. Thus in this view, a therapy must act on this very system rather than on the individual. However, regardless of the therapeutic goals, some of the concepts that were designed in this framework (see Watzlawick et al. 1967) are easily transposable from pathological communication to normal communication and hence are useful for the description of ordinary, everyday, interaction. In particular, these scholars distinguish between ‘symmetrical’ and ‘complementary’ communication, between the level of ‘contents’ and that of ‘relation’, and they bring about the notion of ‘double bind’, originally associated to the genesis of certain kinds of schizophrenia, into the study of social life. In fact, arguably, we are constantly facing situations involving double binds and subject to contradictory imperatives, for example, between negative politeness (do not disturb) and positive politeness (to attend to others’ interests, needs and wants) or between politeness (do not hurt other people) and sincerity (say straightforwardly what you really think). But in normal communication, fortunately, we only need to deal with ‘soft’ double binds, which can be solved by more or less original or routinized means.

3.2 From conversational maxims to Relevance theory

According to Herbert Paul Grice (1975), conversation rests on, so to say, a tacit contract to which the participants are committed. This contract consists in observing the general ‘cooperation principle’ which deploys itself across four ‘conversational maxims’: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relevance (or of ‘relation’) and maxim of manner. It often happens that one or the other maxim is violated, but for most times this will result in the communication of a ‘conversational implicature’ which in return normalizes the utterance. An example will help us illustrate how these maxims work and the issues brought by their application. In the newspaper *Le Monde*, a journalist (named Thomas Ferenczi) replies to the criticisms raised by some readers about how an incident was reported in the journal.

Au cours des dernières semaines, *Le Monde* a reçu plusieurs lettres dont les signataires nous reprochent d’avoir procédé à un « travestissement de la vérité » et à un « mensonge par omission » en rendant compte de l’agression commise il y a deux mois dans le RER contre une femme policier. Ils notent que nous n’avons pas fait mention de l’origine ethnique présumée des agresseurs (lesquels, à ce jour, n’ont été ni identifiés ni arrêtés) et ils s’en indignent. Nous indiquions seulement, en effet, que la victime avait été agressée « par cinq jeunes gens ». « Il ne s’agit pas de « jeunes », nous répliquent nos interlocuteurs, mais bel et bien de quatre jeunes maghrébins et d’un jeune noir. » Une telle précision était absente de notre article. *Le Monde* en effet, à la différence de certains de ses confrères, ne jugeait pas utile de préciser l’origine ethnique présumée des agresseurs tant qu’il n’était pas établi que celle-ci avait un lien avec l’acte commis. [...] Pour éviter toute dérive raciste il faut en effet faire attention à ne pas suggérer, sans avoir mené une enquête sérieuse, que l’appartenance d’un individu à tel ou tel groupe contribue à expliquer son comportement. » (*Le Monde* du 29-12-1996)

Along the recent weeks, Le Monde received several letters of readers reproaching us to have “altered the truth” and “lied by omission” when we reported about the assault of a policewoman in the Parisian metro. They notice with irritation that we did not mention the presumed ethnic origin of the assaulters (who, up to this day, have not yet been arrested nor even identified). It is true that we only mentioned that “five young men” assaulted the victim. “They are not ‘young men’, our readers tell us, but actually four North African and one black young men”. Such a precision was absent from our article. In effect, Le Monde, contrarily to some other journals, did not consider it useful to detail the ethnic origin of the assaulters as long as it is not clear that it has a connection with the event (...). In order to avoid the risk of a racist drift, it is necessary to be careful not to suggest, without having performed a thorough investigation, that the ethnic origin of an individual contributes to explaining his behaviour (Le Monde, Sept. 29, 1996, our translation).

In Gricean terms:

- (i) some readers accuse the journalist of violating the first maxim of quantity: “Make your contribution as informative as required”; that is, they accuse the journalist of having retained pieces of information when they reported the events (cf. “lying by omission”, “we only mentioned ...”). Certainly, “five young men” is less precise than “four North African and one black young men”.
- (ii) The journalist’s justification is based on both the maxim of quality: “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” (cf. “presumed ethnic origin”) and the maxim of relevance, to which the other maxims are subordinated: one has to provide as much as possible *relevant* information, that is, information which is to the point (because if not, the utterance breaks the second maxim of quantity: “do not make your contribution more informative than is required”). Yet for the journalist, making a precision about the ethnic origin of the assaulters would be irrelevant (cf. “not useful”) “as long as it is not clear that it has a connection with the event”.

The last sentence perfectly illustrates the way the Gricean maxims are put at work: if one declares that “some North Africans have committed an assault in the metro”, the recipient will automatically make the utterance relevant by construing an implicature about the link between being from a certain origin and committing assaults (an implicature that the journalist seeks precisely to avoid, cf. “suggest”); such an implicature cannot be taken as true, “without having performed a serious investigation”. Furthermore the implicature potentially leads to racist drift and thus making the point would not only be superfluous but harmful.

This example shows at the same time the descriptive and theoretical usefulness of these maxims (since discourses are produced and interpreted by applying such principles), the fact that they can enter in contradiction with one another (forcing us to tack among them), and the fact that their application is locally negotiable in the course of interaction according to the conceptions and objectives of each participant.

The suggestions by Grice have been taken further by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986, 1995) who elaborated a global theory of communication based on the only maxim of relevance and more precisely on a principle of ‘optimal relevance’: Within a given ‘cognitive environment’ (the set of facts that an individual is capable of representing at a moment *t*), the speaker will try to produce the highest possible cognitive effects at the lowest possible cost. On his side, the interlocutor, who recognizes this intention on the part of the speaker, will calculate on this basis the interpretation which will fit best (see this volume, chapters 6 and 24).

Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), as well as Grice, assume that the basic goal of communication is to ensure and improve the transmission of information among individuals through their cognitive systems, i.e. their apparatus dedicated to information processing. A slightly different approach is to consider the cognitive processes deployed by groups of individuals who engage into a common activity, and to observe in close detail the processes of coordination and the scenarios of decision-making. In such a perspective, cognition is seen no more as an ‘internal’ process but as a ‘distributed’ one, with two dimensions: on the one hand, within the groups of actors, and, on the other hand, in the material ecology of the environment (spatial layout, manipulated objects, artefacts, cf. Suchman 1987; Clark 1997).

From what precedes, one gathers that verbal interaction occurs between individuals, who each have their own competences and resources and who dedicate themselves to a cognitive working out of the utterances meanings. However, firstly, this work is carried out in constant interaction with the environment and the other participants to the communicative event, and secondly, the cognitive process, which is not restricted to pure logical tasks but involves also affects and emotions (the recent works on the topic have a strong focus on the emotional component), must be set visible so that it leaves traces in the interaction. These traces are what the analyst looks for and interprets in adopting a decidedly empirical approach.

4 Methodological issues

Whatever the diversity of approaches and the focus of those who state their belonging to the interactionist paradigm, they all share a consensus on this fundamental fact: given that conversations and other forms of talk-in-interaction are sorts of collective improvisations, the work of describing them involves trying to identify the mechanisms and procedures which ground this co-construction activity. Such a task can be achieved only through a detailed observation of specific interactions but which are admittedly typical of the type of encounter they belong to. The analysis seeks indeed to uncover some regularities and general ways of operation: given that even the apparently most ordinary and chaotic exchanges are “systematically

and strongly organized”, it is the scholar’s burden to put to light this “order” obscured by the “apparent disorderliness of natural speech” (Goodwin 1981: 55–59).

Nonetheless, these commonly admitted principles can be handled in quite different ways and give rise to divergent practices and options, notably about the following aspects:

- (i) *The data*: if everyone agrees that the essential material of the analysis is provided by samples of discourses which actually happened, which are carefully recorded and transcribed (and thus not by simple notes or answers to questionnaires), this principle can be applied more or less strictly. Purists will only accept ‘naturally occurring’ data, whereas other scholars will also take in consideration some kinds of elicited data (that is, data triggered by the scholar himself). There are also recurring debates about whether it is legitimate or not to enrich the analysis by studying various types of data which enables to better understand the naturally occurring interaction, such as fiction (in particular movie dialogues) or ‘follow-up interviews’ with the speaker.
- (ii) *The context*: Gumperz (in Eerdmans et al. 2002: 22), among others, argues that the analyst “always needs *a priori* analysis of context” and has to begin by collecting as much ethnographic information as possible about the site being investigated. However, promoters of CA claim on the contrary that external data has to be kept aside; for them, the context must be entirely considered “something *endogenously* generated within the talk of the participants and, indeed, as something created in and through that talk.” (Heritage 1984: 283)

In such a perspective, one has to take into account the features of the context only when the conversational behaviour of the participants inscribes them within the very text of the interaction itself.

- (iii) *The focus of analysis*: the scholar feeling close to CA will mostly focus on the ‘conversational machinery’ and on micro-level phenomena such as turn-taking, adjacency pairs and the sequential organization of talk, repairs management, joint productions, etc. But one may wish to focus on larger units and try to identify the script that underlies the whole of the interaction, wonder about some aspects of contents, conflicts that may occur within it, the interpersonal relationships that form in it, argumentative processes, the circulation of knowledge ...
- (iv) In the end, the essential question raised by the study of communication within discursive productions in the context of conversational exchanges is the following: what does it mean exactly to *describe* an interaction, if describing always amount to *interpreting*? We will get back to this after having looked at two very distinct types of interaction: exchanges in small independent shops, and political debates broadcasted on TV.

5 Case studies

Let us recall that:

- (i) The researcher never operates on the event itself (raw data) but on recordings (primary data), which only provide a partial grasping of the event (even more so if it's only an audio recording). She needs to stabilize the object of study by transcribing it (secondary data), and it's mostly starting from this artefact that the analysis is pursued, with constant checks of the original recording.
- (ii) The aspects on which the analysis focuses can vary according to the scholar's interests, the tools at his disposal, and also to the properties of the considered interaction – as we shall see in the following two examples.

5.1 Small independent shops

We will now say a few words of a research about interactions in various types of small independent shops (bakery, butchery, florist, tobacco shop, shoe shop, open market, garage, etc.) conducted in Lyon (France) but also in several Arabic-speaking countries and in Vietnam, which allows for cross-cultural comparisons (see Kerbrat-Orecchioni & Traverso 2008).

As we are dealing with a type of interaction where the 'setting' is a fundamental component, we focussed first on the spatial layout and on the physical characteristics of the place where the exchanges occurred. Then we proceeded to analysing the corpus, distinguishing between the following levels of analysis.

- (i) The organisational level, where the 'script' of these interactions is revealed (the unfolding of both verbal and non-verbal activities accomplished by the individuals bearing the two interactional roles of seller and buyer) with a particular emphasis on the management of openings and closings of the encounters.
- (ii) The transactional level, which was studied more specifically from the angle of how the request and the delivery of the product are realized (with various possible negotiations) and how the request and realization of the payment are done (with bargaining in some cultures).
- (iii) The relational level, which concerns the relation between the two interactional roles. In the case of a seller and a client engaged in a 'complementary' interaction, this relation is complex, since the seller is to some extent an 'expert' (thus occupying a higher hierarchical position), but at the 'service' of the client and in this respect occupying a lower position.

We examined how the participants constructed their identities of seller and buyer, what was their mutual relation (considering in particular how that relation evolved through several episodes that diverge slightly from the routine of the business exchange: small talk, moments of humour, of tension or even of conflict), and the

manifestations of politeness, which can take various forms – ritual acts of greeting, thanking, sometimes apology, but also indirect formulations of requests with the conditional or with the use of a minimizing item (“je voudrais un *petit* bifteck” [lit. “I would like a *little* beefsteak”]), which does not imply anything about the physical dimensions of the steak).² Forms of politeness are always somehow pervasive in French businesses: on the average, more than half of the semiotic material exchanged in such sites has only the function of facilitating the interaction, whose objective however, in principle, is only utilitarian (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005b).

5.2 Political debates on TV broadcasts

Political debates is a communicative event than can have particularly variable forms and we won’t seek here to find out their general properties. We examine a sample of a debate of a particular subtype: the confrontation of François Mitterrand, then President of France, with his challenger for the presidential elections in 1988, Jacques Chirac, who also bears the function of Prime Minister (in the context of ‘cohabitation’ where the parliament’s majority is not that of the President).

As these debates are broadcasted (media) interactions, they are inscribed in a complex participative format with two communication circuits. The first one is situated on the TV stage, involving four persons corresponding to two different interactional roles (the two debaters forming a ‘conflicting dyad’ and the two presenters forming a ‘solidary dyad’). Additionally, these exchanges are taken in an embedding circuit between the stage and the public; this communication is not reciprocal but unilateral: the public, despite being the ultimate addressee, lacks the capacity of intervening online.

In this example, as it happens, François Mitterrand *de facto* occupies the highest position, which he attempts to mark by choosing to use a specific term to address his opponent. The rules in France impose that the debaters address each other with the formulation ‘*monsieur* (i.e. *mr.*) + name’. This egalitarian and symmetrical wording categorizes them as mere candidates: this is, actually, their *relevant contextual identity*. It is in fact the only expression debaters have ever used in presidential debates (six to this day), banning titles, even in the mouth of Mitterrand who addressed a minister in 1974 and a President in 1981. It is also what Jacques Chirac does in this very debate. But François Mitterrand introduces a dissymmetry in calling Jacques Chirac “Monsieur le premier ministre” (‘Mr. Prime Minister’) which of course lowers the status of Chirac in the debate by underlying his subordinate function. This takes Chirac to protest and remind Mitterrand that *this*

² In Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005b) we discuss an authentic example of this very type: Customer – Je voudrais un petit bifteck (*I would like a small beefsteak*). Butcher – Un gros? (*A big one?*). Customer – Moyen! (*Medium!*).

evening (the relevant identities are indeed ‘situated’), Mitterrand is a mere candidate, equally to himself. He concludes by an utterance which is involuntarily ambiguous, but anyhow accompanied by a little smile of satisfaction (premature, judging by what follows):

- Jacques Chirac: permettez-moi juste de vous dire que ce soir/ (.) je ne suis pas/ le Premier ministre\ (.) et vous n’êtes pas/ le président de la République\ (.) nous sommes\ (.) deux candidats/ (.) à égalité/ (.) et qui se soumettent au jugement des Français (.) le seul qui compte\ (.) vous me permettez donc de vous appeler monsieur Mitterrand\
- François Mitterrand: mais vous avez tout à fait raison/ monsieur le Premier ministre\
- Jacques Chirac: Allow me simply to tell you that tonight, I am not the Prime Minister, and you are not the President of the Republic. We are two equal candidates, who submit themselves to the judgement of the Frenchs, the only one that counts. You will thus allow that I call you Mr. Mitterrand.
- François Mitterrand: But you are perfectly right, Mr. Prime Minister.

After this reaction, François Mitterrand sits up straight and gives a little mischievous smile. The presenter (Michèle Cotta) can’t help but smile, while looking around while all remain silent for 4 seconds, until the other animator intervenes and introduces the next topic of the debate without any explicit reference at the incident.

Commentators noticed the contradiction embedded in the reply by Mitterrand, but upon closer scrutiny the reply can be interpreted in two different ways depending on the ‘scope’ granted to “you are perfectly right”. Right about what exactly?

The most immediate interpretation is that the evaluation scopes over Chirac’s preceding utterances and mostly over its nucleus, “we are two equal candidates”. According to this interpretation, “you are perfectly right” means: “you are right in saying that we are two equal candidates, which imply that we both need to use the expression *monsieur* + name to call each other”. In this interpretation there is a contradiction between the contents of the utterance and the term actually used, a joke which triggers smile or laughter.

But at the same time François Mitterrand protects himself and finds the possibility to get away with the discursive scandal of a contradiction by suggesting another interpretation. “You are perfectly right” can in fact well be interpreted as anchoring only to the end of the preceding turn, i.e. “you will thus allow that I call you Mr. Mitterrand” which would then mean something like “I will go on talking and with your permission I will go on calling you Mr. Mitterrand” (without hinting at what the other is supposed to do). This other interpretation is made possible by the fact that Jacques Chirac omitted to explicitly bring about the inference that his reasoning entails: “you will allow that I call you Mr. Mitterrand [*and I will ask you to please call me Mr. Chirac*]” (it’s more like an indirect request than a simple demand of permission). The inference is quite obvious but unfortunately for Jacques Chirac, one can always be deaf to inferences. Mitterrand takes advantage of this

killing two birds with one stone: he constructs an image of himself as a polite debater (calling someone by a title indicates in principle the respectful attitude of the speaker) and an open-minded one, who thinks that everyone is allowed to express himself as he likes (conveying something like “I don’t see it a problem that you call me with my name, and therefore let me call you as it pleases me, that is, with your title”). The true reason of this choice, of course, is that he marks and repeats all along the debate the difference of status between Chirac and himself. But at the same time and most of all (since this remained in the people’s memories), he amuses the audience with this joke and plays a good trick to the opponent, victim of the clumsiness of his expression.

6 Conclusion

In order to describe a sample communicative event, one needs first to observe with close scrutiny the verbal and non verbal material which composes it (see also this volume, chapters 3 and 17). In the case above, for example, Mitterrand’s discreet smile, the more blooming smile of the presenter, and the 4-second long silence that follows the candidate’s joke are certainly meaningful, but *of what?*

According to Schegloff (1997: 183–184), ‘talk-in-interaction’ offers to interpretation a ‘leverage’ in the fact that the meaning of exchanged utterances is “embodied and displayed” in and by the behaviour of the interactants. In the perspective of CA, thus, to describe a sample of interaction amounts to gathering these facts which are made ‘available’ and ‘accountable’ by and for the participants of the interaction, but also, simultaneously, for the external observers attempting at describing it.

Yet what is available are *signifiers*, which are not transparent. It’s not enough to scrutinize even very carefully the collected data in order to see their meaning miraculously emerge. In fact, the principle of ‘accountability’ merely reformulates the semiotic principle: every participant delivers signifiers (whatever they may be called: ‘cues’, ‘markers’, ‘indicators’ or ‘features’) to others, who would then simply have to interpret them. Interpretation, however, amounts to an indeed complex activity which in fact mobilizes all sorts of knowledge (about the language, the functioning of communication, the specific rules of the interactional genre, the context, both narrow and wide, etc.) and is certainly not of the straightforward kind sometimes assumed. The analyst’s task is to review the work that was performed online by the participants, a task which seems only possible to achieve if he has the same interpretive resources at his disposal. However, while it is plausible that all participants share more or less the same linguistic and communicative competence, their ‘encyclopaedias’ vary, in particular in the case of media communication where the audience is numerous and heterogeneous: depending on their degree of expertise in the political domain, they will be able or not to decipher

the multiple allusions conveyed by the debaters' utterances, not to mention their ideological preferences which will inevitably influence their interpretations.

The analyst needs to acquire the means of predicting these more or less diverging interpretations. He is a *super-interpret* who needs to 'adopt the point of view of members', that is, of all ratified participants, be they emitters and recipients or confined to the role of reception. This implies that he has to take into account not only what happens in the interaction but also the normative expectations associated with it, since the interactional effects of a given span of interaction results at the same time from what the participants do and what they are expected to do given their status, their role, their identity and all the contextual parameters pre-existing to the event itself, which does not arise *ex nihilo*.

It would be absurd to suggest that the context, the language or the rules of the exchange are entirely created at every step of the discourse. However, observations on authentic data and about the functioning of communication grasped *in situ* have the advantage to shed light on the flexible character of communicative norms, on the adaptability of communicating subjects and the vast unpredictability of the communicated objects:

"Conversation is like playing tennis with a ball made of Krazy Putty that keeps coming back over the net in a different shape." (David Lodge, *Small World*, Penguin Books, 1985: 25)

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Ivana Marková

10 Dialogue and mutual understanding

Abstract: Dialogue, dialogism and dialogicality are central concepts of certain theoretical perspectives which presuppose that human social interactions and understanding are based on mutual construction of meaning and messages, rather than on their exchanges. This perspective is derived from ‘existential dialogism’ of neo-Kantian philosophy, from Bakhtin, Levinas and Vygotsky, among others. It presupposes that humans live in and through language, rather than use it as an instrument. The self and the other are conceived as interdependent in their search for intersubjectivity and for social recognition. Their dialogical relations reveal micro-social and macro-social forms of trust and distrust, which can be unreflected and/or reflected; participants cannot avoid responsibility for communication. All these features are expressions of the ethical nature of dialogue. They have a particular significance for the theory of social representations studying formation and transformation of social phenomena in and through language and communication, and for dialogical professional practices.

Keywords: dialogue, dialogism, self-other, trust, responsibility, social representations, dialogical professional practices

1 Introduction

During the last four decades ‘dialogue’ has become a central concept of various theoretical perspectives in the human and social sciences studying social interactions and mutual understanding among individuals, groups and cultures. Some scholars have suggested that we witness a ‘dialogical turn’ in the human and social sciences and in society at large. Without denying cognitive faculties of the individual, dialogical approaches assume that social knowledge and language originate from the communicative interdependence between the self and others. This means that human minds do not function in isolation but are mutually connected. This presupposition assumes that dialogical relations are deeply rooted in the human nature and permeate all basic mental faculties like thinking, knowing, believing, remembering, imagining and feeling, as well as acting. Their multifaceted and heterogeneous nature is open to others without limits. However, beyond this presupposition, dialogical approaches do not form a unified theory and today they present themselves in numerous forms and originate from diverse theories. Indeed, the very term ‘dialogical’ is ambiguous because it refers, on the one hand to dialogue, and on the other hand, to ‘dialogism’ or ‘dialogicality’, and these phenome-

na are by no means the same. Therefore, in this chapter I shall first speak about dialogue, dialogism and dialogicality; I shall then discuss some basic features of dialogue and mutual understanding; finally, I shall raise some controversial issues in contemporary dialogical approaches, the extension of dialogicality to the theory of social representations, and implications of dialogicality for empirical methods.

2 Dialogue and dialogism

2.1 Dialogue

Today, one often hears that in order to diminish conflicts and misunderstandings there is need for a good dialogue and mutual comprehension in various social strata, for example, among individuals and groups, political rivals or ethnic minorities. Having a successful dialogue presupposes that communication should be based on democratic or symmetric exchanges of ideas and on equal opportunities of participants to express diverse points of view. This also implies that dialogical participants should make the best use of their capacity to establish intersubjective understanding, to ease tension and ascertain reciprocal relations.

In social sciences, however, more precise conceptions are required in order to understand the nature of dialogue and heterogeneous and multifaceted patterns of communicative interaction. We can think about dialogue in at least four different senses (Marková et al. 2007).

In the most common understanding dialogue refers to a symbolic interaction between two or more individuals who communicate with one another using spoken language and/or gestures. Such dialogues could be face-to-face, or by telephone, internet, letters or they can even take the form of published documents. Dialogues of these kinds permeate daily life and one can hardly imagine a world without interpersonal dialogues. Dialogues are fundamental sources of data in human and social sciences.

In another sense, an individual may hold an inner dialogue, without having any outside interactant and external manifestation. This means that an individual may internally speak to absent participants and imagine their responses; such inner dialogues may involve friends, parents, dead persons, enemies, and so on. Inner dialogues were of a particular interest to Mikhail Bakhtin (see below) for whom they were the ways of dealing with interpersonal problems, anticipating others' discourse, and introducing others into imaginative conversations. Inner dialogue would also include, for example, evaluations of one's own and others' past and present conduct, reflections on personal issues and making predictions about one's own and others' future conduct. This could involve, e.g., self-doubts or distrust, or uncertainty about the future action and intentions of the other person. An

inner dialogue can influence or determine the content and thematisation of topics in external dialogue.

Third, we can talk about a dialogue among ideas rather than between people. For example, in *The Rules of Sociological Method* Emile Durkheim (1938: li) writes that it is necessary to investigate the ways in which collective representations “adhere to and repel one another, how they fuse or separate from one another” – in other words, how they circulate in society. This idea was taken up by Serge Moscovici (1984) in his theory of social representations where he insisted that collectively shared ideas form our social environment and that these circulate within networks of images and beliefs.

Finally, we can speak about dialogue in a more emblematic manner, like a dialogue between different cultural traditions and historical epochs (Bakhtin 1986; Lotman 1990), or between cultures of diverse minorities and ethnic groups. For example, a great deal has been written about transformations of the Mediaeval culture into the Renaissance (e.g., Kelley 1970), or of the Renaissance grotesque into the Romantic culture (e.g., Bakhtin 1984a). One can also include here the search for intersubjectivity and the struggle for social recognition (see below) in contemporary discussions about multiculturalism which, too, build on dialogical knowing and understanding of different cultures.

2.2 Dialogism and dialogicality

While dialogue and its different modes have been present in philosophy for millennia, ‘dialogism’ and ‘dialogicality’ are relatively new terms. ‘Dialogism’, ‘existential dialogism’ and the ‘dialogical principle’ were first used in the early nineteen twenties by the religious Neo-Kantian philosophers of the Marburg School in Germany (Holquist 2002; Marková 2003). These terms referred not only to a dialogue, but above all, to the condition that defines humanity: their meanings were existential – or ontological: the ‘self’ exists only in an interdependent relation with ‘other selves’ in and through language and communication, as the ‘I-you’ (or ‘I-Thou’) relation. From this existential or ontological interdependence between the ‘I-you’ philosophers like Hermann Cohen ([1907] 1977), Martin Buber ([1923] 1962), Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy (1924), Franz Rosenzweig (1921), and above all the Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), derived dialogism as epistemology. These scholars presupposed that knowledge is jointly generated by the self and others, whether in local dialogical encounters or throughout historical development. It was from this ontological and epistemological position that these philosophers derived the meaning of a concrete dialogue not just as an exchange of words, but as a mutual and moral binding between participants. Mikhail Bakhtin stated more authoritatively than his predecessors, that dialogism or dialogicality implies that every individual lives in a ‘world of others’ words’. He maintained that humans make the world in terms of others and the entire existence of the self is orientated to-

wards others' languages and others' world; that to be means to communicate and to communicate means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself; and that the limit of the self is not I, but I in interrelationship with other, '*I and thou*' (Bakhtin 1986: 167).

Bakhtin used the notions dialogism (диалогизм – dialogism) and dialogicality (диалогичность – dialogitchnost) interchangeably. However, Linell (1998) and Marková (2003) make a distinction between these two notions. They refer, in the sense of Bakhtin, to dialogism as a philosophical term, as the ontology and epistemology of humanity. This contrasts with monologism, that is, with ontology and epistemology that conceives cognition of the individual as a point of departure for the study of thought, knowledge, language and action. Dialogicality, on the other hand, Linell (1998) and Marková (2003) define as a social-psychological capacity of humans to think, communicate, act and socially engage with others. Accordingly dialogical participants are always co-authors of messages in a dialogue. Such dialogical co-authorship may involve for example, the child versus parents, the individual versus group, group versus another group, group versus local culture, and so on. These diverse kinds of dyadic relations are not separate from one another, but they form interdependent networks. For instance, the dyad like the child versus his mother could be interrelated with that of the child versus the family, the family versus local community, or local community versus a political party, and so on.

2.3 Ethics of dialogicality

According to Bakhtin each dialogical encounter is a unique relation between the particular dialogical participant and his/her partner; the mutual relation between the self and the other is specific and unrepeatable, and it makes the self and other mutually interdependent co-authors. Whether they are in agreement or disagreement, the dialogical participants speak on each other's premises, anticipate each other's responses and communicate on the basis of these anticipations. Ragnar Rommetveit's (1974: 56) perspective of communication as a dialogically based co-authorship is most clearly expressed in his saying that "[i]ntersubjectivity has thus to be taken for granted in order to be achieved". This means that when interactants enter into communication they presuppose at least some commonality in their understanding of the mutually shared social world. In and through dialogue they endorse, confirm or disconfirm their understanding. For example, the mother speaks to the baby as if he/she could already understand the content of her message. By assuming intersubjectivity, she actually helps to achieve it. The rich variety of environments in which the self functions enables multiple and unique relations of co-authorship with different others. However, even within a single dialogical encounter the self can speak from different positions using different voices depending on communicative genre, the topic of dialogue, affect or the type of communicative activity. Arguing for 'unique' relationships between dialogical par-

ticipants, Mikhail Bakhtin rejected the notion of a 'unified' language as an orderly system of signs, as well as the notion of communicative 'neutrality' that reduces communication to transmission of information. Instead, he viewed daily speech as judgemental, evaluative and oriented towards creating new meanings in new situations. This is in line with Karcevskij's ([1929] 1982) ideas about changes in word meanings due to tension arising through the use of words in new situations. As Karcevskij clarifies, a word and its reference are never in a perfect fit because every time we use a word, the concrete condition, under which it is used, is different, even if the difference is only slight. In Bakhtin's case, such tensions in the use of words and utterances are due to the judgemental and ethical nature of dialogue. One may suggest that ethics of dialogical communication is a fundamental distinguishing feature of dialogue as derived from dialogism (rather than from non-dialogical approaches). Bakhtin's ethical concern is related to the speaker's responsibility for his/her word and for communication. The speaker cannot escape responsibility for what he/she says: there can be no alibi in communication. For Bakhtin language was not an instrument to be used; instead, language is a feature of human nature, humans live in language (on this issue see also Benveniste 1971).

Bakhtin suffered political persecution during his life in the Soviet Union. He was excluded from participation in public life and this experience probably contributed to his ideas on language. Emerson (2002) observes that Bakhtin lived his ideal which, however, was not idealistic in the sense that he would have expected that it would be fulfilled. Instead, Bakhtin's ideal was very realistic. As Emerson says, for Bakhtin this ideal meant that "each individual could always choose to answer for a coherent *response* to an event. In a word, it is this individual freedom over the response that the ideal facilitates" (Emerson 2002: 23 Emerson's emphasis). Bakhtin's conviction that language is a feature of human nature implied to him the trust in language, and he transformed that trust into the speaker's responsibility for communication.

Like Mikhail Bakhtin, so Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) conceived ethics as a fundamental feature of dialogicality. In discussing the hermeneutics of trust, Gadamer (1984) emphasises, like Bakhtin, the dialogicality of language: we live in language rather than use it as an instrument. The living dialogue, because it is primary to the written language (Linell 2005), always stands behind the understanding of texts, works of art, and traditions: living dialogue underlies hermeneutics, i.e. the interpretation of texts.

Gadamer, too, conceives inner dialogue as an anticipatory conversation with others ([1975] 2004: 547). Referring to dialogicality of speech, Gadamer highlights a continuous effort "to engage oneself in something or to become involved with someone" (Gadamer 2007a: 163). For him, dialogicality is more than assigning specific meanings to words or explicating assertions. Just like Bakhtin, Gadamer expresses his dialogical position claiming the speaker's responsibility for what he/she says: every statement is a response to a question, whether his/her own or

someone else's and 'the only way to understand a statement is to get hold of the question to which its statement is an answer' (Gadamer 2007c: 241). This position also indicates the primacy of dialogue in the study of language over the system of grammatical rules, syntax and vocabulary. For Gadamer, language is above all a living dialogue or conversation, that is, language-in-use (Gadamer [1975] 2004). These Gadamer's views not only recall those of Bakhtin (1984b) but also of later Wittgenstein ([1953] 1958).

Both Gadamer and Bakhtin accentuate that in dialogue we take risks by exposing our own discourse to the doubt of others. Gadamer presupposed that laying bare one's own assumptions and beliefs in front of others lets oneself open to the others' evaluation and a possible denigration of the self. Since the self cannot fully penetrate the extent to which the dialogical participants share the self's meanings, Gadamer asks what, in the end, is the nature of language: "Is it bridge or barrier? Is it a bridge built of things that are the same for each self over which one communicates with the other over the flowing stream of otherness? Or is it a barrier that limits our giving up of our selves ..."? (Gadamer 2007a: 164). Gadamer concludes, just like Voloshinov ([1929] 1973: 86) that it is in the nature of language to bridge the perspectives of the self and the other in an effort to understand one another. The richness of dialogue rests precisely in the possibility of creating non-transparent expressions, like metaphors, irony and other kinds of implicit meanings which, again, ascertains that language is not an instrument but a form of being which enables the world to be understood (Gadamer 2007b: 272) and to be the living experience.

Emmanuel Levinas explores the ethics of dialogue at an even more basic level than Bakhtin and Gadamer. Like for the Neo-Kantian philosophers (see above), so for Levinas, the 'dialogical principle' underlies the philosophy of dialogue. For him, the dialogue cannot be anything but an ethical dialogue (Levinas 1995: 108). Ethics starts with the self's responsibility for the other and it is responsibility that positions the self in the world. Therefore, all human thinking should be subordinated to this position: engagement with others is moral and obligatory. It is asymmetrical since the self holds responsibility for the other. By expressing this principle, Levinas gives precedence to ethics over ontology. This means that he gives the precedence to the self's responsibility for the other over the self's own existence (Levinas 1978: 75–76). This also implies that the ethics of dialogue precedes and pre-conditions dialogue in the everyday sense of the word: that is, Levinas does not view dialogue as an exchange of *mutual* dialogical contributions. Instead of mutuality, Levinas introduces the idea of deep asymmetry between the self and other: it is the self who is responsible for the other. These religious views of Levinas's dialogicality differ from the dialogism of Bakhtin and Gadamer. In the ethics of Levinas's dialogue the other is guiding the self's position. In contrast, for Bakhtin and Gadamer, responsibility for communication between the self and the other is mutual.

3 Some basic features of dialogue and mutual understanding

3.1 Intersubjectivity and a search for social recognition

Words and messages in dialogue are always doubly oriented, i.e. towards the self and towards the other. They express themselves in the self-other(s) dialogical situations as a tendency towards mutual understanding – or intersubjectivity, and as a search for social recognition.

The first dialogical tendency, intersubjectivity, refers to various implicit and explicit self-other relations, which may concern individuals, groups or even cultural traditions. Developmental psychologists (e.g., Trevarthen 1979, 1992; Rochat 2009), have been pre-occupied with postulating theoretical models and obtaining empirical evidence for early *intersubjectivity* and the infant's predisposition for interactional reciprocity. By intersubjectivity they mean openness and readiness of the infant to enter into relations with another human being and they have shown that non-responsiveness of the carer leads to fear and distress in the baby. Trevarthen (1992: 102) maintains that understanding intersubjectivity can provide an explanation "of how human social and cultural knowledge is created, how language serves a culture and how its transmission from generation to generation is secured". Lev Vygotsky, too, viewed the development of the child's dialogical capacity in terms of mutual understanding with the other (Vygotsky 1987: 134). Matusov (1996, 2011) reminds us, however, that intersubjectivity must not be conceived only in terms of the growing mutual agreement between the participants; equally important, dialogical intersubjectivity may lead to disagreement with, and the critique of, the other participant. This point was already strongly argued by Bakhtin who emphasized that the dialogical cognitions and affects are always in tension; they clash, and the participants judge and evaluate one another. Bakhtin (1981: 314) foregrounds dialogue as a strife of divergent perspectives: "one point of view is opposed to another, one evaluation opposed to another ... this dialogic tension ... permits authorial intentions to be realised" in heterogeneity of languages and of ideas. Understanding, precisely because it is active, is always evaluative.

The second dialogical tendency, i.e. the search for social recognition, involves the self's orientation towards oneself and towards the other. However, the self ascribes emphasis to one's own agency and seeks acknowledgement from the other as an equal – and often more than an equal – dialogical participant. The strife for social recognition is not a peaceful process but it takes place in and through tension and negotiation of goals between the self and others and by imposing self's own meanings upon the other. Studies in *difficult communication*, for example, between people with highly unequal communication resources, like those with congenital deafblindness, people with cerebral palsy or learning difficulty (Nafstad and Rødbroe 1999; Marková 2003), bring to light the dialogical features that would

remain unobserved in unproblematic communication. In such dialogues, consistency and innovation in imposing one's own meaning on the other is essential for a person with a speech or communication problem in getting the message across. In difficult communication, the interactional impact of any communication resource is dependent not only on the impaired speaker but also on the unimpaired speaker's interpretation of the intended meaning. Subtle attention to gestures, anticipation of the next contribution, or responsiveness to minute communicative interactions in dialogue – all these are essential to achieving mutual understanding. No kind of resources employed by the impaired speaker can be *a priori* considered as non-communicative or as a discrete and isolated unit. It is a challenge for practitioners and carers to treat each resource, e.g., movement or sound, as potentially communicative, that is, as an intentional gesture in a complementary relationship with other resources, as well as part of the total interactional environment (Souriau, Rødbroe and Janssen 2008).

Whether the participants search for intersubjectivity or whether they search for social recognition, an essential feature of dialogue is communicative tension. Dialogical tension is an impetus to interaction and dynamics of dialogue; it arises from forces that bind dialogical interactants, like attraction and repulsion, dominance and submission, trust and suspicion, etc. Without the dynamics of dialogical tension and its variants, like intention, attention, contention and otherwise, human dialogue would be no more than an exchange of information or an apathetic communication. Dialogical tension also involves an effort of the self to understand and surmount the unknown qualities and positions of participants. We do this, Bakhtin argued (1986: 142), by active understanding and evaluating thoughts and speech of others and by mastering these. According to Bakhtin, ambivalence in communication never changes into monovalence; these two oppositions coincide in the world of becoming, in which there are no hard boundaries between objects, words or cultures. Understanding speech and thoughts of others on our own terms, and transforming them into our own communicative resources, is part of the dialogical process.

3.2 Trust and dialogue

In and through dialogue, interactants confirm their trust that they live in a mutually shared social world. They share certain communicative resources, e.g., emotional, linguistic, intentional, symbolic or otherwise. By choosing the relevant response the listener endorses his/her understanding of the speaker's message. Just like in other spheres of life, trust in dialogue can rarely be complete because speakers' knowledge of one another and of the subject matter of discussion is always partial. Beyond the boundaries of available knowledge are only fragments that participants piece together and imagine what thoughts and activities might be expected from

the other and how to cope with uncertainties arising from the unknown possibilities. Georg Simmel's (1950) historical analysis of the diversification of forms of trust led him to conceive the trust of modern strangers as an instrumental and impersonal relation. He argued that as modern cultures become continuously more and more objectified, they grow impersonal. This means that knowing the other person is more and more restricted and fragmented and therefore, trusting the other becomes constrained to very specific areas, and these areas are often known only superficially. The self's characteristics may remain a secret to the other and consequently, there is less and less that can be trusted. In such relations, dialogical communication between the self and others becomes replaced by an objectified and impersonal transmission of words.

Simmel's (1950) analysis of trust is based on making the distinction between those with whom the self shares and does not share discreet knowledge. In secret societies, reciprocal trust is the most important internal relation among members who exert a very efficient discipline upon the moral accountability of members (Simmel 1950: 473). Moral accountability unites members of specific groups or associations and separates them from others by an indissoluble secret bond (Moscovici 1987), like in the Mafia. In contrast, perceived or imagined conspiracy thrives on revealing secrets to those who should not be trusted.

Trust and distrust are fundamental characteristics of interaction, language and communication. Participants in communication manifest trusting and distrusting in diverse forms. There are unreflected and reflected forms of trust, there are different modes of trust in micro-social and macro-social relations, among friends and strangers, among lay persons and professionals, and so on. In language and communication, these forms may co-exist and mutually interact with one another. For example, we find trust and distrust in linguistic aspects of language, the content of speech, mutual moral and ethical obligations of speakers, in the nature of interaction, relations among speakers, in hiding and revealing secrets, and so on. Just as we are born into the world of people, objects, ideas, and just as we trust our vision in telling us that what we see are trees and not chairs or vice versa, so we trust that objects have names and that these names are relatively stable.

Other forms of trusting may refer to the truthfulness of dialogical participants. When a speaker says 'these cherries are sweet', in addition to his/her trusting that the listener understands the meaning of cherries, the speaker knows that the listener may trust or distrust that the speaker is telling the truth. Therefore, in addition to trusting the socially shared meaning, the listener's trusting may refer to truthfulness of the speaker's claim. One could ask what linguistic markers indicate to the listener that an utterance is or is not trustworthy. In daily discourse, trusts and distrusts are nested in networks of other meanings. We may expect that if, in a dialogue, trusting is nested in the network of believing, faith, hope, solidarity or co-operation, different aspects of trust will be foregrounded than if trusting is nested in the network of risk, danger or suspicion.

3.2.1 Trust in micro-social dialogical relations

Social, philosophical, socio-biological approaches and child development studies suggest that trust forms an ontological basis of communication (Marková, Linell and Gillespie 2008). For Erikson (1968: 82), 'basic trust' is the first mark of the mental life of a baby. It exists prior to any feelings of autonomy and initiative and develops through communication. Basic trust between the carer and baby or between the self and another person, since it involves two or a few individuals only, can be called 'micro-social' (Marková, Linell and Gillespie 2008). Basic micro-social trust of the infant is pre-reflective or pre-conceptual. It starts as the self-other interdependence and takes the form of a highly asymmetric dependency of the child on the carer. At the same time, the carer is driven by the infant's communication and physical and social needs. In their conceptualization of the basis of self-other interdependence, Linell and Rommetveit (1998) focus on 'pre-morality', as a developmental precursor of morality in early infant-carer interaction. They refer, in this sense, to the infant's capacity for spontaneous transcendence of the self into the feelings and intentions of another person, although this is not yet reflectively monitored. The infant is already at birth equipped with a readiness for mutual affective attunement, for a mode of dialogical transaction with the responsive adult caretaker that is inherently separate and differently organized from handling unperceptive, unthinking, and unfeeling physical objects (Trevvarthen 1992: 104).

Ragnar Rommetveit's (1974) perspective of communication as a dialogically based co-authorship involves several multifaceted and interdependent forms of trust and ethical requirements. These are so basic that they have ontological or existential significance. Rommetveit refers to these forms of trust as communicative contracts. They can be implicit and explicit, and participants expect that all involved parties in communication will respect them. The term 'contract' in communication refers to semantic and pragmatic potentialities from which speakers select relevant meanings and trust that listeners will make sense of the selected meanings. When these meanings are selected, they become relatively stabilized and bind speakers to act in accordance with these intersubjectively established contracts. Linell and Rommetveit (1998) conceptualized morality as ranging from implicit pre-morality and proto-morality to explicit and mature moralization in communicative contracts.

Bakhtin (1984b) powerfully analysed dialogical trust and risk in confessional discourse in Dostoyevsky's novels. Confession is a self-reflective dialogical interaction between the self and other with a deep personal meaning. Confession is one of the main communication genres of Dostoyevsky's heroes and anti-heroes and Bakhtin's insights provide the reader with minute details of confessants' strategies in their effort to cope with personal and interpersonal conflicts exposing themselves to the distrust of the other. Confession may involve revealing, to the other, the most intimate personal secrets. Therefore, the confessant's social recognition

by the confessor, as being a worthy human being, could be at stake. The anticipated response of the confessor to the confessant's secret makes this genre "the extreme and acute dialogization" (Bakhtin 1984b: 227–228). Bakhtin shows that most significant confessional utterances of Dostoyevsky's heroes are filled with intense sensitivity towards the anticipated response from the other. Such sensitivity is present in every feature of communication, from the tone of voice to the internal semantic structure of speech. Anticipation of the response from the other is infiltrated with fear of rejection, with anxiety as to what the confessor might think about the confessant as a human being, with guesses what the judgment of the confessor might be. Dostoyevsky's characters who confess to the crime at the same time despise and reject those who agree with their condemnation. Such extreme and acute dialogicality shows an extraordinary dependence and orientation of the self towards the other, and at the same time an extreme animosity and rejection of the other's evaluation and judgment.

3.2.2 Trust in macro-social dialogical relations

Other forms of trust involve 'macro-social' relations in groups, institutions or society as a whole. It does not mean that unreflected and pre-conceptual forms of trust disappear, but they partly remain unreflected and partly they transform themselves into reflected macro-social forms of trust and distrust. Macro-social relations require different kinds of communication styles, communication activities and genres than micro-social ones. In general, in macro-social relations trust/distrust becomes progressively transformed into strategic and calculated forms. When trust becomes explicitly verbalised and thematised, this indicates that it is no longer taken for granted and that it may have been partly or totally destroyed. Equally, when trust is negotiated, argued about or brought in rhetorically, we can hardly claim that it exists among interacting individuals or institutions. Moreover, communication has different channels including verbal, phonetic, gestural, and gaze. These can convey different meanings, some indicating trust and others distrust. Nevertheless, even strategic and calculated forms of trust may become transformed into common knowledge and habitual thinking. In such cases trust/distrust becomes present as an implicit part of discourse and is no longer thematised and topicalised. It is once again taken-for-granted and commonly understood. But this taken-for-grantedness is secondary; it has arisen in and through reflective thinking. It becomes a generalised social phenomenon in relation to anonymous and unidentified others, for example the relations and encounters between professionals and customers, clients or patients.

Some institutions have been created to enable disclosure of information which would elsewhere be considered sensitive and/or confidential: psychotherapy sessions, doctor consultations, encounters with one's bank advisor, etc. While such

institutions are supposed to function impersonally and effectively, they are served by humans and therefore, still retain polyvocality; for example, the professional party may voice identities of the institution, the professional expertise, and that of the compassionate other. In such cases, trust/distrust works in a way that is different from everyday life: we do not usually assume that the other individual is personally interested in our disclosures, but only in his/her capacity of being a professional expert or a representative of the institution.

As is well known from daily practices, people often co-operate with others whether or not they trust them. Humans consider co-operation as essential for sustaining order in society, even if they do not trust one another. Since dialogicality is characterised by multivoicedness, participants may fulfil normative requirements of conversation and at the same time hide their emotions and respond to the other in an ambivalent manner in order to disguise particular knowledge.

4 Contemporary issues in dialogical approaches

Today, accounts of dialogical approaches are hugely diverse. They range from broadly based 'Rethinking Language, Mind, and the World Dialogically' (Linell 2009) through to more specific theories of the dialogical self (Hermans and Kempen 1993) and to analyses of detailed aspects of utterances in contemporary French dialogical linguistics (e.g., Salazar-Orvig and Grossen 2004). Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism also inspired scholars who came from diverse traditions of thought. These scholars too, applied dialogism and dialogicality to their own perspectives of dialogue and communication. Some of these approaches stem from the ancient philosophy of Platonic dialogues (e.g., Hart and Tejera 1997), others from more recent forms of phenomenology (Levinas 1978, 1995); others follow from the interactionism of James (1890) or Mead (1934); some are inspired by Habermas's (1984) communicative action, and still others start from various schools of discourse (see Linell 2009 for reviews of those) and conversation analysis (e.g., Schegloff 1991, 1995, 2007). Although all dialogical approaches emphasize dialogue and communication, they foreground diverse perspectives and focus on different issues. Not surprisingly, these diverse perspectives have triggered questions and even disputes as to what counts and what does not count as a dialogical approach.

For example, Per Linell (2009: xxix, 8, 420) explicitly states that he takes an ecumenical approach in relation to dialogical theories. His perspective includes several related, as well as not so very closely related, approaches to language, cognition and communication. What is essential in Linell's analysis is the division between monologism and dialogism. He characterizes monological theories as information processing theories of cognition and of communication as transfer of messages from sender to receiver; these further include conceptions of language as consisting of static signs and fixed meanings, and contexts as external to language,

language use, thinking and communication (Linell, 2009: 36). Providing a deep analysis of these issues, Linell implies that if a theory cannot be characterized as monological in the terms he proposes, it can offer, both theoretically and empirically, something to dialogical approaches.

In contrast to Linell's broad position, others have become interested in the search for similarities and differences between Bakhtin's ideas and other approaches to the study of dialogue. For example, it has been often acknowledged that although Mikhail Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky never met, and never referred to one another in their work, their ideas were very similar. In particular, their approaches to dialogicality, their socio-historical conceptions of language and communication, the nature of inner speech (Emerson 1983), and the self- and other-consciousness (e.g., Wertsch 1991), have been viewed as strikingly similar. True, during the nineteen twenties, ideas about the social nature of language and of interdependence between the self and its social environment were commonly accepted in the Soviet Russia. The study of assumed similarities and differences between Bakhtin and Vygotsky inspired a whole generation of social scientists. Recently, however, Eugene Matusov (1996, 2011), while acknowledging the enormous contributions of both Bakhtin and Vygotsky, has drawn attention to irreconcilable differences between the two scholars. He argues that Vygotsky's approach was largely influenced by Hegel's monological and universalistic philosophy, while Bakhtin's approach was dialogical and pluralistic.

Some researchers have warned of making quick jumps from pragmatism to dialogism because, despite their considerable similarities, there are also substantial differences between Bakhtin's dialogism and pragmatic concepts of the self and dialogue (e.g., Taylor 1991; Barresi 2002). For example, Charles Taylor (1991), who conceptualizes the sense of coherent self in relation to ethics, values and dialogical action, explains that the dialogical action is substantially different from the classic notion of co-ordination of movements prevailing in pragmatism. Taylor argues that the co-ordination of movements, e.g., throwing a ball and catching it by another person does not capture the integration of the self and the other that is required for a flow of movement, e.g., in dancing, sawing wood or in conversation. Referring to George Herbert Mead (1934), Taylor argues that taking the attitude of the other' is no more than another monological act within behavioural ontology. Here the self is socially constituted through taking attitudes of the other rather than through a mutually generated integrative action. Therefore, "we need not Mead and his like, but rather Bakhtin", Taylor (1991: 314) concludes. Taylor's expression *Mead and his like* could also refer to William James who, as Barresi (2002) argues, provided a rich account of the self. Nevertheless, Barresi points out that we need to be careful with attempts to translate too quickly James into Bakhtin because these two authors are dealing with different theories of the self. In James's theory of the self, each element of thought, while connecting to past thoughts, it is nevertheless independent. In contrast, Bakhtin's epistemological perspective is

interrelated with the perspective of another person: it never displaces or overcomes the other (Barresi 2002: 245). Bakhtin's self and other, while remaining individuals and responsible speakers, thinkers and knowers, are dependent on one another: they jointly generate language, thinking and knowledge.

4.1 Extending dialogicality to social representation

In human and social sciences, the term 'representation' refers to a concept with a long history and multiple meanings. This concept ranges from mental representations of the individual, through to Durkheim's collective representations, and finally to Moscovici's social representations. These three kinds of representations are concerned with very different phenomena although Durkheim's collective representations and Moscovici's social representations have some ideas in common. Nevertheless, the main disparity between Durkheim's collective representations and Moscovici's social representations refers to language and dialogue. In contrast to the former, social representations are interdependent with language and communication and most specifically, with dialogicality.

The theory of social representations has occupied the field of social psychology during the last 50 years. It studies mundane understanding, formation and transformation of meanings of complex social phenomena in and through language and communication, history and culture. It also studies behaviour in relation to social representations. Examples of such phenomena would be health and illness (e.g., AIDS, mental illness or diabetes), political problems (e.g., democracy, totalitarianism, trust and distrust of institutions), environment, and any issues which are in public discourse. Such phenomena may present danger, threat, as well as hope, for individuals and groups; they invigorate, innovate and transform society; they create conflict and innovation as well as facilitate conformity. The multifaceted characteristics of such phenomena reveal themselves in and through language and communication of various kinds, e.g., in the media, the public discourse or inter-personal dialogues (Moscovici 2001, 2011; Moscovici and Marková 2000).

Serge Moscovici proposed and developed the theory of social representations, both conceptually and empirically, in 'La Psychanalyse: son image et son public' (Moscovici [1961] 1976; English edition in 2008). This classic explored, within the specific socio-political culture of the late 1950s in France, transformations of professional and theoretical knowledge of psychoanalysis into everyday thinking and discourses of various social groups and the mass media reporting. Transformation of professional and theoretical knowledge into everyday thinking is accomplished by, and enriched through, tension between diverse means of communication and images, arguments based on trust and distrust of others, collective memories, conscious and unconscious beliefs, myths and metaphors, fears and hopes.

Since social representations are phenomena of contemporary social concern, they may be disturbing, fear-provoking, desirable or otherwise important. They are negotiated and disputed: they always communicate something about something, and refer to phenomena of relevance in the public discourse. In other words, they are always directed at others: through pointing to someone they speak and through expressing something, they communicate (Moscovici [1961] 1976: 26; Marková 2003: 120).

We can distinguish two fundamental meanings of social representations. First, social representations refer to concrete social phenomena. In the process of representing, individuals and groups communicate about, act upon and intervene in life practices, using resources from culture and traditions as well as from their living experience. Historical, cultural and contemporary concerns may be in conflict, lead to disruption of routines, turn them upside down, and call for action. The second meaning is the theory of social representations as a dialogical theory of social knowledge. In this theory of social knowledge social representations can be conceived as multifaceted structures of knowledge and beliefs. They are co-constituted by the self and others in and through language and communication.

Language and communication have yet other significance; they express the dynamic co-existence of distinct modalities of thinking. To think means to pursue diverse mental routes; these may range from scientific to religious, from literal meanings to metaphoric interpretations, from jokes to formal expressions, and so on. Moscovici ([1961] 1976, 2008) calls these diverse modalities of thinking and communicating 'cognitive polyphasia'. The concept of cognitive polyphasia is inherently dialogical. It is suited to and articulated in the contents in which speakers create links to others' communications, anticipating their responses, reactions, and feelings. Such communication-centred thinking takes a number of directions: it judges, evaluates and criticizes, makes proposals for action and is often controversial; it contributes to considering the issue in question from diverse perspectives enabling the formulation of different arguments. In the study of psychoanalysis (Moscovici [1961] 1976, 2008), asymmetries strongly dominate systems of communication like propaganda, diffusion and propagation. For example, Moscovici's ([1961] 1976, 2008: 334) concept of 'semantic barriers' retains specific asymmetries in contents and processes of diverse representations interacting with one another. Moscovici explored semantic barriers particularly in the relation between language and action in propaganda. In order to achieve transformation of beliefs in individuals, propaganda creates a specific language by using qualified expressions and so changing meanings of words. Words that originally referred to certain representations, e.g., psychoanalysis as a therapy may now refer, with a qualified expression 'American', to an alternative representation 'American psychoanalysis', which has an ideological and negative meaning. By distorting the meanings of words, propaganda not only erects semantic barriers among groups, but it affects actions, creates conflicts and postulates new ideologies (see Gillespie 2008).

4.2 Dialogism and empirical methods

In their empirical studies, dialogical researchers often apply research methods that were developed by, and are suited to, non-dialogical approaches. For example, while dialogical approaches theoretically assume that the speaker is listener-oriented and that the listener is speaker-oriented, dialogues are analysed monologically. Contributions are coded as if each participant was solely responsible for a contribution; that is, a contribution is not treated as jointly co-constructed by both participants. Or interactions are often treated in a mechanistic way, as if all that participants do is take turns or exchange messages. Such interactions evoke external, 'give-and-take' sequences, in which each participant is responsible either for 'give' or 'take' (Rommetveit 1974, 1990, 1992). These conceptual problems reveal themselves in particular in the fields of difficult communication, e.g., in dialogue with language- or communication-impaired persons, where mutual understanding totally depends on co-ordination of verbal contributions or gestures. Janice Light (1988: 71) commented on this problem in the field of augmentative and alternative communication where dialogue is often treated in an individualistic manner. She noted that the studied behaviours are typically coded and quantified in isolation from each other as well as from the other participants' behaviours. This happens despite the fact that theories account for mutuality and reciprocity of dyadic communication. More recently, Akkerman and Niessen (2011), too, argue that dialogical theories are often unable to conduct empirical studies of social phenomena that would correspond to dialogical theories. These authors see the main reason for this gap between theory and empirical research as the lack of available concrete methods to explore the dialogical self. However, one can argue that it is not the method that is lacking but the way the method is conceptualised and used. One can use a dialogical method, e.g., a focus group, in a traditional and mechanistic manner.

If one adopts Bakhtin's position that dialogical speakers are in unique relations, then proper dialogical approaches should focus on the study of single dialogical cases. In their recent study of dialogical analysis of intersubjectivity, Gillespie and Cornish (2010) review four methodological approaches like a comparative self-report, observation, analysing talk and ethnographic engagement and consider them from a dialogical perspective. Using a dialogical approach, Zittoun and Gillespie (2012, 2015) analyse the diary of a single person during the World War II. Gillespie (2012), using the White House transcripts focuses on a single case in which the President John Kennedy and his advisors address the Soviets and in particular Khrushchev during the Cuban missile crisis. Linell and Keselman's study (2012) is an example of a dialogical analysis of interpreter-mediated interviews with Russian adolescents seeking asylum in Sweden. As mentioned earlier, the dialogical approach is particularly important in research involving people with language and communicative disorders like cerebral palsy (e.g., Marková 2003) and people with deaf/blindness (e.g., Nafstad and Rødbroe 1999). Nafstad and Rødbroe show that

while in dialogues involving people without particular language and communication problems many processes (e.g., exchange of mutual looks, gestures, questions and answers) are automatized and therefore, taken for granted, in dialogues involving people with language and communication disorders these processes become foregrounded. This is where dialogicality is particularly visible. During such processes, ‘gestures and dialogicality play a very important role ... during dialogues partners support the emergence of these gestures and co-create their transformation into symbolic expressions or shared meaning’ (Souriau, Vege, Estenberger et al. 2008). The authors emphasize the uniqueness of each individual with deaf/blindness, and the ways these individuals and their dialogical partners co-create meanings through repetitions, novelty and narratives.

In using unique dialogues in research, a fundamental question arises: how does one generalize from single cases? One cannot validate and make generalizations from single case studies in the same way one would do so in population studies. Flyvbjerg (2006) emphasizes that unique cases (or single case studies) must be strategically selected in order to bring out their richness and make them most effective for ‘analytic generalization’ (the term ‘analytic generalization’ was introduced by Yin (2003, pp. 31–33) in order to differentiate it from inductive or statistical generalization). This means that research using single case studies is based on generalization to a theory rather than to results obtained by statistical testing.

5 Conclusion

One might suggest that the ‘dialogical turn’ mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is largely a response to the powerful tendency in contemporary life towards scientific and technological dominance, to the emphasis on efficiency, measurements and a strict quantification of any human phenomena, e.g. dialogical contributions, life whether they concern dialogical contributions, life satisfaction, feeling injustice and trusting others. This tendency has a long tradition. Max Weber’s (1920) ideas of rationalization in the early years of the 20th century predicted the emergence of a technocratic individual. While Weber was pessimistic about the power of rationalization and bureaucratization which imposes on society the ‘iron cage’ and ‘mechanistic petrification’ as he called it, and which results in disenchantment of society, he nevertheless accepted the criteria of impartial rationality. The educator must present a value-free knowledge; prophets and demagogues have no place in lecture rooms; they can make their speeches in the streets (Weber, 1920).

The emphasis on dialogue and mutual understanding overturns this tendency. It rejects the notion of the neutral transmission of information which may naively give an impression of ‘scientific preciseness’, and which bureaucratizes human re-

lations. Instead, it highlights the dialogical nature of humans, the uniqueness of dialogical encounters and their ethical nature. It is a challenge for human and social sciences to foreground dialogue and mutual understanding in their theories and methods. This has a particular relevance in professional dialogues involving therapeutic practices, communication with the disabled and language impaired.

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IV. Types of discursive activities

Jean-Louis Dessalles

11 Narration and reasoning, from structure to biological function

Abstract: Human conversation has a particular structure that bears no resemblance with any other known communication system. People's talking comes in two forms: narratives and collective argumentative reasoning. This characteristic conversational structure cannot be fortuitous. Conversation is a costly behaviour, if only by the time and energy it demands. Surprisingly, there have been few attempts to relate conversational structure to any function it may have. This chapter illustrates conversational structure with examples and explores the issue of its purpose.

Keywords: conversation, narratives, argumentation, evolution, biological function

1 Introduction

Verbal communication is what makes the most obvious difference between *homo sapiens* and other animals. The time we devote to it is disproportionate. Spending about six hours a day (Mehl & Pennebaker 2003) in verbal activities, speaking some 16,000 words on average per individual (Mehl et al. 2007) seems ridiculous. What is so essential about talking that we devote so much time and energy to it? Strangely enough, this issue about the *function* of verbal communication has rarely been addressed. What is even more surprising is that there have been very few attempts to relate the *structure* of verbal communication to any supposed biological function it may have. This chapter proposes precisely to do this. I will consider the two main conversational modes, narration and argumentative reasoning, and illustrate them with examples. I will then observe that these two components of verbal behavior can be linked to proximal functions, which include the maximization of unexpectedness. Lastly, I will consider the issue of determining the possible ultimate (i.e. biological) function of narration and of argumentative reasoning.

2 The human conversational behaviour

Human conversation is characteristic. It has no equivalent in nature (Hauser et al. 2014). Animal communication is most often manipulative (Krebs & Dawkins 1984) or consists in specialized costly displays (Zahavi & Zahavi 1997). There are well-known exceptions, such as communication among social insects such as bees and

ants (von Frisch 1967; Ryabko & Reznikova 2009), but these exceptions are all specialized communicative devices designed to achieve material goals, such as locating food sources. In most cases, the repertoire of signs is limited to less than a few dozens. We cannot exclude the possibility that some cetacean species make use of extremely rich communication systems, but for now there is no evidence of any elaborate analogy in form and function with our own. Some primate species spontaneously combine two meaningful signs to produce new meanings (Arnold & Zuberbühler 2006; Ouattara et al. 2009). However, there is no strong evidence that this ability, which mainly concerns innate signals, may be considered as a precursor of human verbal communication, even in an embryonic form (Hauser et al. 2014).

Human conversation has no equivalent in the technical world either. Our machines do communicate large amounts of data. They use definite protocols designed to achieve efficiency, i.e. to maximize the rate of error-free data transmission. These protocols bear no similarity with human conversation. In comparison, our way of communicating appears incredibly inefficient. Not at the level of speech: we can recognize more than 15 phonemes per second in a noisy acoustic environment, a feat that machines have not yet achieved in a reliable way. But what people do with this complex machinery seems desperately disappointing. People use many words, often in a repetitive manner, to make a point that can be summarized in one or two sentences. It seems that the conversational bandwidth is used in a way that any engineer would consider absurd. Verbal communication would be indeed very different if it were designed to maximize information transfer.

We will not conclude that conversation is inefficient, nor that it is a pointless activity, that we talk just because it is pleasurable, just to fill up the time. On the contrary, each spontaneous conversation should be regarded as a marvel. As will be suggested here, none of the elements mentioned in a conversational move are there by chance. They all contribute to making the move locally optimal, even if what is optimized is definitely not the information transfer rate.

Since the aim of this chapter is to associate possible biological functions to verbal behaviour, we only consider *spontaneous* verbal interactions. In particular, the word ‘conversation’ will be used in a restricted way, meaning chatter. We will therefore exclude from our scope the various institutionalized language games, such as formal argumentative debating, task-oriented dialogues (e.g., hotel booking dialogue), formal negotiations or written texts, that have attracted much attention in several fields of study on language and discourse (Walton & Macagno 2007). Spontaneous chatter makes up by far the major part of our six hour daily interaction time (Mehl & Pennebaker 2003). It could be thought to have a more complex structure than formal dialogues, due to the absence of institutionalized rules that limit the participants’ freedom. From a cognitive perspective, things turn out however to be simpler.

A cognitive approach to spontaneous conversation considers the evolution of beliefs and desires throughout the interaction, whereas the participants’ intentions

are pushed into the background. From this perspective, the way utterances are linked one to each other is almost independent from who uttered them. For instance, self-answers make soliloquies sometimes hard to distinguish from dialogues. The main concern is to know what makes the *content* of an utterance acceptable. It is to predict the conditions in which saying that the carpet is red is appropriate or, on the contrary, would lead to an expression of incomprehension like “So what?” (Labov 1997).

This cognitive perspective offers a simplified description of conversation. Spontaneous verbal interaction seem to come in two distinct modes: narration and argumentative reasoning (Bruner 1986; Dessalles 2000). This partition echoes a classical distinction observed in written texts, where narration is marked by specific features such as the preterit in French (Feuillet 1985). Even if the narrative and the argumentative modes are sometimes intertwined in actual conversations, they can often be observed in pure form during several minutes of spontaneous verbal interaction. But the main reason to distinguish these two modes is that they correspond to different cognitive mechanisms. Together, these two conversational modes fill up more than 90 % of spontaneous verbal communication (Dessalles 2008a). We will consider them in turn.

3 Conversational narratives

The importance of narration in spontaneous conversation, despite a few precursor studies (Labov 1997; Sacks 1992; Polanyi 1979; Tannen 1984), has not been properly acknowledged until recently (Norricks 2000). One possible reason is that people do not tell stories in unnatural conditions, when they are observed by scientists and asked to behave spontaneously. People almost systematically tell stories to friends or family, but less often to strangers. Narratives may occupy from 25 % (Dessalles 2008a) up to 40 % (Eggins & Slade 1997) of conversational time. Conversational narratives most often come in clusters, in what Tannen called *story rounds* (Tannen 1984).

Before the turn of the century, few studies had attempted to describe spontaneous conversational narratives from a cognitive perspective. Most studies concentrated on learned or written narratives, which result from a long elaboration process. We are dealing here with spontaneous narratives, in which the speaker holds the ground for seconds or minutes, telling a past event with the hope that listeners will find it *interesting*. Quite often, the story is told for the first time and its structure is designed in an on-going process. How? Some studies in the Conversational Analysis domain offered detailed descriptions of spontaneous narratives. However, the ones cited above are among the few that attempted to address the issue of interest. Knowing what makes a narrative interesting to interlocutors cannot be properly solved by limiting oneself to studying their ‘surface’ (structural schemas,

style, ...). Interest is a cognitive phenomenon that requires a description in terms of knowledge, desires, expectations. Let's illustrate this with a few examples.

3.1 The nude model

A conversational narrative is about an event that, supposedly, has really happened. It is easy to recognize a narrative by the fact that the four W's (When, Where, What, Who) get generally instantiated as the story develops. Moreover, as we will see, a narrative has a point, which becomes clear when the story reaches its climax (Tannen 1989). Consider the following conversation (adapted from Norrick 2000, p. 55–56; transcription details omitted; emphasis added).

- Brianne: It was just about *two weeks* ago. And then we did some figure drawing. Everyone was kind of like, “oh my God, we can’t believe it.” We – y’know, *Midwest College*, y’know,
[...]
Brianne: like a ... *nude models* and stuff. And it was really weird, because then, like, just *last week*, we went downtown one night to see a movie, and we were sitting in [a restaurant], like downtown, waiting for our movie, and *we saw her* in the [restaurant], and it was like, “that’s our model” (laughing) *in clothes*
Addie: (laughs) Oh my God.
Brianne: we were like “oh wow.” It was really weird. *But it was her.* (laughs)
Addie: Oh no. Weird.
Brianne: I mean, that’s weird when you run into somebody *in Chicago*.
Addie: yeah.

This conversation is about a coincidence. The person that Brianne encountered by chance has certain unique characteristics: she is that very person that posed in the nude for a figure drawing lesson Brianne had attended a week before. Our intuition tells us many things about what makes this story interesting. Let us comment on the elements that Brianne included in her narrative.

- *Just last week*: This temporal mention is by no means fortuitous. Interest would drop down if the same story was told in the same conditions months after the fact. Conversely, the excitement due to such an event is maximal at the moment of its occurrence or when it is reported shortly after. This does not preclude the possibility of telling old stories, but to be mentioned, old facts require some strong thematic connection which is dispensable in the case of recent events.
- *Just about two weeks ago*: The time interval between the two encounters with the model is an important parameter. Interest would be weaker if the interval had been of one month or one year instead of only one week. The impact of

the story would have been greater, conversely, if the second encounter had occurred just two hours after the class.

- *Nude model*: The model's nudity is essential to the story. With a dressed model, the story would be much poorer indeed, as it would lose its exceptional character.
- *In clothes*: Brianne needs to underline the obvious contrast between the two encounters.
- *Midwest College*: Brianne makes it explicit that figure drawing with a nude model is a truly exceptional situation in such an institution. Interest would lessen if Brianne was attending an art school with regular life drawing.
- *It was her*: The actual presence of the model in the restaurant is crucial. The story would be much poorer if the person seen in the restaurant had just been looking like the nude one, but was not her.
- *Chicago*: The size of the city matters here, as the second encounter would have been more likely in a small town.
- *We saw her*: Brianne reports the event as a first-hand story. The same anecdote would appear much less interesting to Addie if it had happened to one of Brianne's neighbors rather than to herself.

Among these story elements, two are obvious to the addressee: the fact that the model is dressed in the restaurant, and the fact that the scene happens in Chicago. Brianne nevertheless bothers to mention them explicitly. She had to choose among hundreds of details those which she considered relevant to the interest of the story. She did not mention how she was dressed herself, nor how the weather was on that day or whether the model was blond or brunette. According to the claim of the present paper, her choices are by no means fortuitous. She mentioned exactly those elements that have a definite impact on interest.

Most individuals, in a situation of telling the same story, would not miss any of these elements. What does this narrative skill consist of, and where does it come from? Are we told, as children, that a good story preferentially refers to recent facts? That when two similar situations are reported in a story, they should be close to each other in time? That the size of the city where fortuitous encounters occur is relevant, whereas the size of the building or the size of the country is not? Are we explicitly told by our caretakers that first-hand stories are better than second-hand stories? Is narrative know-how just a list of carefully learned recipes of that kind? Or do individuals possess a general knowledge of what makes an episode reportable? What sort of intuition tells them how to present the episode so that it appears more exciting to listeners?

3.2 Unexpectedness

Despite its apparent intricacy, the human spontaneous narrative skill seems widely shared (Scalise Sugiyama 1996), probably as much as the Cartesian "Good Sense".

This is only possible if this intricacy is only apparent. As it turns out, many components of the human narrative skill can be reduced to a single instruction:

Make the event appear maximally unexpected to the audience

Before defining it properly, we must mention a few caveats about the notion of unexpectedness. First, 'unexpected' does not merely mean 'improbable'. The occurrence of a lottery draw like 1–2–3–4–5–6 is hugely unexpected and is worth announcing to anyone, despite the fact that it is as probable as any other draw. Second, 'unexpected' does not necessarily mean 'new'. Two of my colleagues were born on February 29th. This fact, once known, should not surprise any more. Yet, whenever the topic comes to anniversaries, especially by the end of February, colleagues like to mention the coincidence again and enjoy being amazed at it. This difference between unexpectedness and newness allows people to retell old known stories and still enjoy them (Norrick 2000). Lastly, unexpectedness does not need to be experienced firsthand. Many stories rely on the fact that unexpectedness is supposed to be experienced, not by participants, but by characters. The following excerpt is translated from French. 'Burro' is not a French word, but it sounds like 'beurre' (butter):

- D: [...] she was with her cousin in Spain. And so ... they wanted to buy butter. And then [laugh] Her cousin said to her, she didn't speak one word of Spanish, but she said to her: "I can speak Italian; Italian and Spanish, that's the same", and then
- O: Oh là là ! Oh là là !
- D: So she enters the store, and she says 'Burro'. And then [laugh] then everyone was staring at her, and so 'burro' means 'donkey'.
- O: Oh! [laugh]. It means 'donkey'! She wanted to say 'Butter'! Burro. [laugh] It plays tricks, isn't it?¹

Even someone who is perfectly fluent in Spanish can get the point and find the story interesting. To do so, one must imagine the surprise of the cheese seller and of the other customers, who were aware of only one side of the story. Unexpectedness, even in others' minds, makes good stories.

1 Original:

- D – [...] elle était avec sa cousine en Espagne. Et alors, elle dit, ils voulaient acheter du beurre. Alors [rire] y a sa cousine qui lui dit, elle parlait pas un mot d'espagnol, mais elle lui dit « moi je parle italien, italien et espagnol c'est pareil », alors
- O – Oh là là! Oh là là!
- D – Alors elle entre dans le magasin, puis elle dit 'burro'. Et alors, [rire] alors tout le monde regardait, et alors burro, ça veut dire l'âne.
- O – Oh! [rire]. Ça veut dire l'âne. Elle voulait du beurre! Burro. [rire] Ça joue des tours, hein?

What is unexpectedness, if it is neither low probability, nor newness, nor first-hand surprise? A cognitive approach to this problem leads to define unexpectedness as *complexity drop* (Dessalles 2008b) or, in other terms:

$$\text{Unexpectedness} = \text{abnormal simplicity}$$

Simplicity is known to play a major role in cognitive science (Chater & Vitányi 2003). For instance, the human brain reconstructs the hidden parts of a visual scene by following a principle of maximal simplicity. Technically, simplicity is measured by the size of the shortest available description (see www.simplicitytheory.org). When the outcome of a lottery is 1–2–3–4–5–6, people see a structure that is much simpler than anticipated. It is the simplest sequence starting from the lowest bound 1. By contrast, a boring draw like 12–17–29–33–34–40 cannot be summarized. One can predict that the interest of various draws depends on their descriptive simplicity. For instance, draws like 20–22–24–26–28–30 or 7–14–21–28–35–42 would make events worth telling, but they would be less thrilling than 1–2–3–4–5–6.

The careful examination of Brianne's narrative suggests that every bit of information she provides concurs to increasing the complexity drop between some standard, expected, world and the actual situation she witnessed. Some elements of the narrative increase complexity on the *expected* side.

- *Midwest College*: Art lessons in a Midwest college are not expected to involve nude models. We must imagine that special (i.e. complex) circumstances led to the event.
- *In clothes*: If one forgets about the context, then the naked/clothes contrast highlights the difficulty (i.e. complexity) of imagining circumstances that allowed Brianne to see that normally dressed person sitting over there, naked.
- *Chicago*: In a large city, more complex circumstances are required to bring the woman to the restaurant where Brianne recognizes her.

On the other hand, Brianne provides crucial elements that diminish complexity on the *observation* side, by making the event simpler to describe. As a consequence, the event appears abnormally simple by contrast with the complexity of the circumstances that allowed it to happen.

- *Just last week*: The second encounter is much simpler to locate in time (for a given precision) than if it had occurred one year ago or 'some day'.
- *Just about two weeks ago*: The drawing lesson is simple to locate as well, and the two encounters are simple to locate in reference to each other.
- *Nude model*: Knowing the feature 'nude in public', the woman is easy to disambiguate among all people that Brianne encountered.
- *It was her*: If the encountered woman had not been the model herself, but merely been looking like her, she would have been more complex to disambiguate.

- *We saw her*: If the story had been second-hand, the description of the witness would add up to the description of the event, making it less simple.

Each element of a story can be evaluated in relation to its effect on unexpectedness. If the model had spoken to Brianne in the restaurant, without recognizing her, e.g., asking for salt, the story would have been still better. The reason is that the minimal actual description of the encountered individual requires discriminating among the customers in the restaurant. With the mention that she spontaneously spoke to Brianne, this discrimination is unnecessary; the description complexity diminishes and interest goes up.

Any conversational narrative aims at making the ‘complexity drop’ between expectations and description maximal. To appreciate the story, listeners must be able to measure the drop. A listener who could believe that nude models are commonplace in college art lessons, or who wouldn’t know that nudity in public is rare, would not totally get the point in the nude model story. In the ‘burro’ story, listeners must understand that the word ‘burro’ evokes neither ‘butter’ in Spanish nor ‘donkey’ in French. If so, they know that the cheese seller must have imagined *complex* reasons why the two women were asking for a donkey in her shop; but listeners also know a much *simpler* reason, the lexical confusion. If any of the two sides is not understood, the complexity drop, and therefore the punch line, vanishes.

The complexity-drop rule controls many aspects of narrative interest. We mentioned its role in coincidences, in exceptionality (a nude model in a Midwest college, a donkey in a cheese store) and in the importance of first-hand experience. Complexity drop also explains why recent events, or events occurring in the vicinity, make better stories, as locations close in time or space are simpler to describe (Dessalles 2008b). Various aspects that contribute to the narrative experience, like metaphors in which two independent domains turn out to share the same structure, can also be characterized by a drop in complexity. But one of the most notable effects of the complexity-drop rule is its role in controlling emotional intensity.

3.3 Emotion

Generating complexity drop in listeners’ minds is a requirement for a conversational story. Besides this essential component of the human narrative competence, a few optional features enhance interest. One is humour, another one is emotion. When exposed to emotional situations, individuals have a systematic tendency to share them (Rimé 2005). Though emotional stories are preferentially recounted to close acquaintances, they may spread around, as they are retold as second-hand narratives in a majority of the cases, especially when the generated emotion was high (Rimé 2005: 162). As a result, emotional events tend to invade our conversations with close friends.

The following example occurred in a series of stories about different facets of a recent earthquake experience. Albert and Ned are two brothers. All are college students (adapted from Ervin-Tripp and Küntay 1997; transcription details omitted).

Albert: you know that that nice glass china display case in our dining room?
 Ned: in the dining room
 Cynthia: oooh
 Albert: trashed
 Cynthia: forget it!
 [...]
 Cynthia: oh my god!
 Albert: oh a er antiques genuine antiques
 Ned: and the amount of money we have lost is going to be astronomical

Interest in this excerpt is controlled by the amplitude of the loss. This parameter controls the intensity of emotion. Cynthia's "oh my god!" indicates that the emotion is shared. But the same parameter also controls the *simplicity* of the situation. We can imagine situations in which the two effects are disconnected. The fact that a person wins huge gains in the national lottery makes the news. Being exceptional, the event is by definition simple to isolate from all other lottery winning situations. Simplicity generates a complexity drop, and therefore unexpectedness. One does not need to share the winner's happiness to enjoy the news. In the china display case story also, the amplitude of the loss makes the situation exceptional, and therefore simple. But it has an additional effect, which is to create an intense shared emotion. Emphasis (e.g., by the use of the word 'astronomical') has two coupled effects: it increases the scale of the event, and it simplifies it by making it exceptional. In other situations, emotion and unexpectedness depend on separate parameters. For instance, the death of a common friend is a highly emotional event in itself, but the intensity of the sorrow is controlled to a large extent by the unexpectedness of the event (e.g., whether she was badly ill or had a car accident).

Humour is another essential component of many conversational narratives (see also this volume, chapter 6). The 'burro' story, for instance, generated laughter. As for emotion, unexpectedness and humour are intimately connected on many occasions. Humorous effects in conversation are often due to the existence of an automatic behavioural sequence that proves inappropriate (Bergson 1940). In a normal world, people behave appropriately; any inappropriate outcome requires complex circumstances to occur. The existence of an automatic (and therefore simple) behavioural sequence that produces the inappropriate outcome creates a complexity drop. The difference of complexity generates both unexpectedness and comic effects.

4 Argumentative reasoning

Spontaneous argumentation is the other major conversational mode. The word ‘argumentation’ is taken in its basic acceptance, as a rational exchange of statements. This basic meaning does not require any intention of convincing or any antagonist attitude toward an ‘opponent’. In its extended sense, argumentation has been widely studied as a language game involving conflicting agendas between participants. The distinction between the basic and the extended notions matches the opposition between “argumentative reasonableness” and “strategic maneuvering” (van Eemeren et al. 2007; van Eemeren et al. 2012). From the cognitive perspective adopted here, we just consider how the successive predicates that are expressed by participants are logically linked to each other. As we will observe, the participants’ freedom is quite limited in this domain.

The following conversation has been recorded in a Japanese family (original in Japanese, names changed). The conversation starts in the narrative mode, as an event is announced: Masako’s cousin Keiko gets married.

- Father: Masako, you remember my young brother, Yasuyuki ...
[Yasuyuki is Masako’s uncle; they have not seen each other for several years.]
- [...]
- Father: Yasuyuki’s daughter, her name is Keiko.
- Masako: Yes, will she get married?
- Father: Yesterday, we’ve got a phone call. Well, they already registered at the office,
- Masako: Oh dear.
- Father: And in February next year,
- Masako: Oh dear.
- Father: On the 21st, I think. He asked whether we could attend, so ...
- Masako: Oh my.
- Father: The two of us [Father and Mother].
- Masako: I’d like to go as well.
- Father: But they said they wouldn’t invite the cousins.
- Masako: No?
- Father: No.
- Masako: Well, we didn’t see each other [with Keiko] a great deal.
- Mother: Not that much.
- Father: We didn’t either [Masako has two brothers, and Keiko wasn’t invited when they got married].
- Masako: Yes.
- Father: If they invite all the cousins, such as Yukio [cousin from another family], Takashi and Hiroshi [Mother’s brothers],

- Masako: Yes, I understand,
 Father: That would be too much, and so, I didn't ask up to what point they invite, since yesterday, on the phone,
 Mother: Keiko did come to the grandmother funeral [Father's mother, some ten years ago],
 Father: She came.
 Mother: We did not see her again since.
 Father: Yes.
 Masako: Yes, I only saw [her] a couple of times since my childhood.

The conversation shifts when Masako asks: "I'd like to go as well". Then the participants are involved in a discussion about the fact that Masako is not invited to her cousin's wedding. Then the three participants, including Masako, enumerate various good reasons to explain why she will not take part in the wedding.

The argumentative part of this excerpt relies on a *logical conflict*. A logical conflict occurs when participants consider a proposition with two opposite attitudes. In the present case, the conflicting proposition can be phrased as "Masako is invited to Keiko's wedding".

- Invited:* Masako wants to be invited.
Not invited: Yasuyuki said that cousins (this includes Masako) are not invited.

Note that the first attitude is a desire, whereas the second one is a piece of knowledge. When only knowledge or beliefs are involved, the logical conflict is said to be *epistemic*; when desires are involved, we call it *epithymic* (Dessalles 2008b). Argumentative reasoning results from attempts to solve the logical conflict. The way human beings do this is characteristic. It can be captured by a simple recursive procedure. Interestingly, the procedure is the same, regardless of the nature of the logical conflict, epistemic or epithymic. A minimal model of this procedure, named C-A-N, consists in three phases: Conflict, Abduction and Negation (Dessalles 2008b). According to the CAN model, individuals involved in argumentative reasoning perform a very limited set of cognitive operations.

- *Conflict*: detect any conflicting proposition, i.e. a proposition that receives two opposite epistemic or epithymic attitudes.
- *Abduction*: infer a likely cause of the conflicting proposition; possibly propagate the conflict to that cause.
- *Negation*: consider the opposite of the conflicting proposition

The logical conflict is solved either when actions can be performed to change the state of the 'world', or when a hidden piece of knowledge is revealed or retrieved from memory, or when the intensity of the weaker attitude is considered tolerable. This latter possibility is made possible by an operation of revision:

- *Revision*: Attitudes may be revised through re-evaluation

The first conflicting proposition is ‘Masako goes to the wedding’. It is wished by Masako, but presented by her father as false. At this point, the participants face an epithymic conflict that triggers the argumentative discussion. The father’s next move, “they wouldn’t invite the cousins”, propagates the conflict to one of its causes: the statement ‘cousins not invited’ is both believed and not wished. Masako’s next utterance “we didn’t see each other a great deal” makes sense if the following knowledge is shared:

- Close family is invited to the wedding
- Masako belongs to close family

This knowledge leads to an epistemic conflict about the proposition ‘Masako is invited’: she should be, but she is not. Masako propagates the conflict on one of its causes: ‘Masako belongs to close family’, and then revises one of the conflicting attitudes by observing that she is not so close to Keiko’s family after all.

With his next move “We didn’t [invite the cousins] either”, the father continues with the conflict located on ‘cousins not invited’. Its negation: ‘cousins are invited’ is equally conflicting (wished and not believed). But the corresponding wish generates a new conflict: ‘cousins were invited at the brothers’ weddings’ (wished and not true).

Then, the father continues with the negated version of the conflict, considering the possibility that ‘cousins are invited’, and he detects a new epithymic conflict: ‘That would be too much’. The mother’s utterance: ‘Keiko did come to the grandmother funeral’ can be seen as an attempt to restore the fact that Keiko is close family, but it turns out to do the opposite (‘We did not see her again since’).

This example is typical of collective argumentative reasoning. Though the C–A–N procedure aims at capturing a basic human ability, it leaves room to choices, preferences and cultural or personal style. For instance, in the above excerpt, Masako chooses to solve the logical conflict herself, instead of insisting on its intensity. With a similar context, the conversation could have taken another course in another culture or in another family. Despite these variations, we are bound to use the few operations listed in the C–A–N procedure, or face the risk of appearing irrational.

5 From structure to function

5.1 Why structure implies function

Spontaneous conversations do have structure. We just saw that they consist in two forms of behaviour: narratives and argumentative reasoning. The two modes are often intertwined. In the wedding example, the argumentative part interrupts the “news section” of the conversation. Conversely, whole narratives may sometimes

play the role of a single argument. But the two modes obey different laws. Narratives aim at maximizing unexpectedness and emotion sharing, whereas argumentative discussions are designed to deal with logical consistency.

Narratives and argumentative reasoning are emergent processes. In a narrative, the storyteller thinks of an unexpected point to make. To make the point unexpected to the eyes of her audience, she must bring in some context, such as the figure drawing class in the nude model story. We all have the skill to build up a good conversational narrative. Even if some seem to excel in the exercise, all individuals have the competence to tell stories in which all elements are relevant. And all healthy individuals possess the competence to appreciate others' narratives. Similarly, all healthy individuals know how to make a relevant point during an argumentative discussion, either by pointing to a logical conflict or by mentioning a possible solution to some underlying logical conflict. Discussions emerge from the collective attempt to deal with inconsistencies between beliefs and desires. Even if we are not equal in making the best sensible points at the right moment in a discussion, people who produce utterance that have no bearing on the current logical conflict are rapidly considered bizarre or mentally ill.

These systematic mechanisms provide *structure* to conversation. Each utterance must play a definite role: either contribute to unexpectedness or to emotion sharing (narratives), or highlight or solve logical conflicts (argumentative reasoning). Conversational structure emerges from these elementary moves. From this observation, we must ask why conversation does exist. Why do people behave in such a mechanistic way? They could do many other things with words. They indeed do many other things with words, but marginally so. Most of the 16,000 words that we daily pronounce on average are used, neither for poetry nor to give orders, but for purely conversational purposes. So what is the function of spontaneous conversation? What is the function of telling narratives about real-life events? What is the function of publicly dealing with logical conflicts?

For long, the question of why people talk has remained not only unanswered, but also largely unasked. The mystery deepens as one realizes that most human conversation is about futile matters that have no real material impact on the participants' lives, as illustrated by the 'nude model' or the 'burro' examples. One may be tempted to consider that verbal communication is precisely no more than a pointless activity. We would talk, just because it is pleasurable. This attitude towards the purpose of conversation is wrong, for two reasons. First, language behavior involves a huge cost, not only by the daily hours it demands of each of us, but also because of the cognitive resources that exist only for it. For instance, a good deal of our huge cortex is devoted to episodic memory (Cabeza et al. 2008), a uniquely human feature that is involved in retelling events in conversation (Suddendorf & Corballis 2007). It would be absurd to think that all this time and cognitive resources are wasted in a pointless activity. The second reason is that conversational competence, like other aspects of language such as phonology or syntax,

has a definite structure, as if it had been “designed”; and in the natural world, only natural selection can produce designed features (Pinker & Bloom 1990). If we follow this logic, conversational behaviour must have a definite biological function. Which one?

The inconsequential character of most conversational topics casts doubt on traditional attempts to explain away language behaviour in terms of ‘information transmission’ or ‘knowledge sharing’. Conversational behaviour would look radically different if it were optimized for information or knowledge transfer rate. No engineer would recognize a data transmission protocol in our daily narratives. If conversation served the purpose of useful information transmission, speech would be used most of the time advisedly, didactically and efficiently to increase others’ knowledge. Moreover, inconsequential topics should not only be avoided, but also reproved, which is obviously not the case. Besides, accounting for language behaviour by merely invoking its benefits for the collective is a type of explanation that has been abandoned half a century ago (Williams 1966): Biological explanations require that costly behaviour benefit *those who pay the cost* for it. Something must be at stake during our daily conversations that matters significantly more than the transfer of futile facts.

5.2 The social meaning of conversation

If asked why people talk, a lay person would probably answer that it is obviously for social purposes. The social impact of language has been emphasized in several scientific domains, including sociolinguistics. Surprisingly, the idea surfaced only by the end of the twentieth century in scientific studies about the evolution of language, thanks to the work of the primatologist Robin Dunbar. In a famous book (Dunbar 1996), he compared conversation with grooming behaviour in primates. Observations showed that the function of grooming in chimpanzees and other primates goes far beyond mere cleaning purposes. There is a strong correlation between who-grooms-who and who-helps-who (Silk et al. 2006). Language, according to Dunbar, would have replaced grooming in the social bonding process. Indeed, it is considered an obvious fact that, in our species, close friends must have frequent (verbal) interactions (Friedkin 1980; Gilbert & Karahalios 2009).

Why are we so different from our sister species in this respect? Why are we talking in the hope of making friends, instead of merely tickling each other’s skin? Why do our conversations show so much structure, with their narratives and argumentative discussions, when they could be limited to synchronized grunts? The preceding development allows us to rephrase the problem. We must explain why human beings select their friends among those who make interesting and relevant points during conversation. This means, according to what precedes, that friends are chosen among those who are best able 1. to share unexpectedness and emotions and 2. to deal with logical conflicts.

5.3 A biological function of conversation

Human beings devote time and efforts to displaying their ability to deal with *information*. When they tell narratives, they demonstrate their ability to bring unexpected information, especially emotional information. When they signal or solve logical conflicts, they show off their ability to question the quality of information. Why do these two abilities represent personal assets that individuals benefit from advertising? Why only in our species?

Answering these questions amounts to discovering the biological function of language. We are still far from a scientific consensus on this issue. Note that being able to pose the problem in the above terms is already a significant progress. Now, hypotheses about the function of language that are compatible, both with current language use (narration and argumentative reasoning) and with biological laws, do not abound. In particular, we must explain how *speakers* benefit from publicizing their scoop stories and their solutions to logical conflicts. Most traditional accounts of why language exists take the perspective of listeners, who may sometimes benefit from the information they receive. But this listener's perspective is unable to explain why the major part of conversational costs is on the speaker's side. Why are individuals ready to play the speaker's role in conversation? The speaker's role bears the burden of acquiring original information. To do so, one must spend time and energy and sometimes take risks to witness events worth retelling; one has to acquire new knowledge and memorize a huge quantity of facts. And finally, one must spend time to deliver this hard-won information to choosy listeners. Few explanations, if any, among the traditional ones, pass the 'speaker's cost' test.

To go any further, we must take some risks, as daring ideas are better than a lack of hypothesis. Elsewhere (Dessalles 2008a; 2014), I proposed to correlate two events that are known to have occurred in human phylogeny. One of them is the advent of a signalling behaviour that would be a precursor of language. This new behaviour consisted in using pointing gestures and words to signal unexpected events. It is absent from other primates species (Tomasello 2006), and it survives nowadays in our current narrative behaviour.

The other event worth mentioning in this context is the advent of weapon use. Hominins discovered how to use sticks and stones to kill conspecifics by surprise (Woodburn 1982). It is tempting to see a logical relation between this new possibility of risk-free killing and the new signalling behaviour. When the greatest danger comes from your group mates, individuals have no choice but to choose friends that can protect them. Among the qualities that ideal friends must have in a context in which murder is so easy, the ability to spot danger comes first. This is perhaps a reason why we spend so much time and energy in signalling unexpected situations to others. It is a way of advertising our alertness. Our narrative behaviour would be reminiscent of a time when there was no police and no justice to deter potential murderers. To be accepted as friend still nowadays, one must demon-

strate one's ability to spot any unexpected situation before others. We do so every time we tell a narrative or bring news to our friends.

If we follow this line of reasoning, emotion sharing in narratives makes sense as well. By sharing emotions, individuals make themselves predictable to their friends and diminish the probability that they could be a danger themselves. Our propensity to deal with logical conflicts during our lengthy argumentative discussions makes sense as well, if it evolved to deter liars (Dessalles 1998). A similar claim can be found in the notion of 'epistemic vigilance' (Mercier & Sperber 2011). Note, however, that the evolutionary account is quite different here. The point is not to protect oneself against erroneous information, as supposed with the 'epistemic vigilance' notion, but to publicly denounce any inconsistent stance. Again, what matters is not information *per se*, but its impact on social choice.

6 Conclusion

For long, the human talking behaviour did not get the attention it deserves. Language has been initially studied in its abstract form, far from the conditions of its spontaneous use. When conversation was studied, it was to highlight its ritualized aspects, such as phatic communication, regardless of what the utterances were about. In this chapter, I emphasized the difference between the two spontaneous conversational modes, narratives and argumentative reasoning. The distinction between these two modes becomes obvious as soon as the content of conversations is analyzed from a cognitive perspective. The structures of narratives and of argumentative discussion differ radically. All predicative elements in a narrative must contribute to maximizing unexpectedness or to emphasizing emotion. During argumentative reasoning, on the other hand, all predicative elements must have a logical effect, either by pointing to a logical conflict or by attempting to solve an underlying logical conflict.

This structural approach to conversation shows that *conversational relevance* is much more constrained than 'relevance in general'. A relevant element in a narrative must enhance unexpectedness or emotion. A relevant element in a discussion must introduce or solve a logical contradiction. These phenomena require two conditions to be apparent. First, they must be observed in *spontaneous* conversation, when participants are among friends and feel free to speak. Second, analysts must be fully informed of the contextual elements that were available to the participants. These two requirements: spontaneity and context, are unfortunately lacking in many controlled studies of talking behaviour. It may explain why the basic cognitive structure of spontaneous conversation has been ignored for long.

This chapter is an attempt to go beyond the study of conversation *structure*, by addressing the issue of its *function*. Surprisingly, most studies on language do not consider what it is good for. The huge investment in time and energy that human

beings universally devote to conversation excludes any possibility that it be a mere social epiphenomenon or convention. The recent advent of social media such as blogs and micro-blogging services (Kwak et al. 2010), open software communities (Scacchi 2005) or social network platforms (Gilbert & Karahalios 2009) illustrates how much individuals are ready to invest in showing off their informational abilities. And the fact that social media correlate social affiliation with communicating performance should no longer be a surprise, once acknowledged that the primary function of language and conversation is to select friends. The recent emergence of social media offers further evidence for the fact that there is much more to conversation than a fortuitous social habit.

Conversation does not fit the traditional picture that is offered of our daily interactions, in which people are supposed to cooperate and gently exchange useful information, like goods on a marketplace. Conversation is more like a stage. It is a stage on which individuals appraise each other's ability to be relevant. Any content, even the most futile topic, is taken as an excuse to show off one's ability to detect unexpectedness or to deal with logically inconsistent attitudes.

Spontaneous conversation has a tight structure. The content of every utterance is optimally designed to contribute to the *point*, by contributing to its unexpectedness, to its emotional value or to some logically conflicting attitudes. This structure serves a proximal function: to advertise the speaker's ability to deal with information. And as we suggested, showing off one's informational competence has an ultimate function: to attract friends. Conversation is the place where social networks are formed, broken and repaired. This is the biological function of conversation. When seen from a broad perspective, conversational behaviour calls for an explanation that relates structure to function, as for any behavioural feature that can be observed in nature. I have mentioned possible reasons why *homo sapiens* behaves in such a strange manner. The point of the present chapter is not to present the issue as solved, but rather to signal that it is an important question that should attract much more attention.

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Neal R. Norrick

12 Narrative discourse

Abstract: This chapter investigates cognitive aspects of narrative discourse centered, first, on narrative and memory and, second, on narrative in interaction. It explores the strategies and mental processing participants in conversation employ to get a story straight, highlighting the role of rational contextual construction and evaluation vis-à-vis reliance on memory. Then the consideration of social aspects of narrative discourse focuses on tellability and evaluation, both of which depend on and help constitute such social functions as breaking the ice, exchanging personal information, entertaining, identifying group values, goals, and expectations. A final discussion of methodological issues and applications reviews perspectives on the study of spoken narrative from Labov onwards, touching on developmental narratology, along with newer approaches to storytelling such as cognitive narratology, and recent research on narrative in talk at work.

Keywords: narrative, storytelling, memory, evaluation, tellability

1 Introduction

Narrative is a fundamental human resource for the organization of experience, sense making and talk-in-interaction. The stories we tell help reify our experiences and allow us to construct coherent autobiographical identities: this construction of identity through storytelling has both cognitive and social significance, enabling memory, molding our understanding of self and facilitating interaction with others. Our tendency toward the narrative mode of thought renders not just stories but also instructions, recipes, travelogues, reports and proposals with narrative forms and features.

To illuminate the forms and functions of narrative in verbal communication, this chapter will address, first, cognitive aspects of narrative in verbal communication in § 2, focusing in turn on narrative in interaction and narrative in memory, then social aspects of narration in verbal communication in § 3, focusing in turn on the perennial themes of tellability and evaluation, and closing, in § 4, with a discussion of methodological issues and current developments and their significance for applications in the area of verbal communication.

The data used in this investigation derive from two corpora of English conversation: (i) the Saarbrücken Corpus of Spoken English (SCoSE), the American conversation portion of which was recorded by my students at Northern Illinois University in interaction with their friends and families in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the British conversation portion of which was recorded by my students

in Saarbrücken, Germany, during their visits to England between 2000 and 2010. (ii) The CallHome Corpus from the Linguistic Data Consortium, consisting of 120 long-distance phone calls lasting up to thirty minutes between native speakers of English recorded in the early 1990s. The participants received free phone calls for volunteering; most participants called family members or close friends. For the sake of consistency, excerpts from the CallHome Corpus have been adapted to the transcription conventions of the SCoSE.

2 Cognitive aspects of narrative in verbal communication

Humans are preconditioned or acculturated to cognize experiences and plans in narrative form; the fundamental “a and then b, and then c” structure is so natural as to seem irrefutably logical, apparently hot-wired into our perception of events in the physical world. Of course, there can be diversions and digressions from this basic progression, but they tend to confirm through their marked structure the expectedness of the pattern “a then b then c”. Bruner (1991: 4) writes, ‘We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative’. As Brockmeier (2000) argues, the process of autobiographical identity construction takes narrative form, synthesizing cultural and individual orders of time: thus, we narrate experience to internalize it as part of life stories (Linde 1993) or autobiographical identity (Brockmeier 2001). According to this view, we narrate a story for ourselves, and once we have this story (autobiographical identity), we bring it to discourses as the basis for particular stories fabricated in the particular context.

An important distinction is drawn between episodic memory and semantic memory by neuro-scientists (Tulving 1972, 1983, 1984): episodic memory consists in autobiographical events, including times, places, associated emotions, and other contextual information that can be explicitly stated. It is this episodic memory which allows us to travel back in time to recall personal experiences (Tulving 2002). Semantic memory is built up from the facts, concepts and schemata related to the items in episodic memory. Bruner and Weisser (1991: 135) describe autobiography using Tulving’s terms as ‘a canny act of putting a sampling of episodic memories into a matrix of organized and culturally schematized semantic memory’. The process of narration organizes and forms experience, but it must be accessible for purposes of both episodic and semantic remembering.

2.1 Narrative in Interaction

The whole complex of issues surrounding storytelling in face-to-face interaction constitute cognitive aspects of verbal communication: production, reception, co-

production of narrative in conversation. Many diverse linguistic structures highlight and support narrative discourse in natural contexts: they guide tellers in the production (and co-production) of stories and listeners in their reception. They allow (incipient) listeners to introduce and recognize narrative, to become listeners, to respond properly during the storytelling and to recognize and react properly to the conclusion, perhaps responding not just with comments and evaluations but with apposite stories of their own.

One finds plenty of research on how adults acculturate children into storytelling practices (Ochs, Smith and Taylor 1989; Blum-Kulka 1993; Blum-Kulka and Snow 1992), but there is none on how children acquire listening practices. Correct listening requires more than just saying 'mhm', 'uh-huh' and 'wow' at the right times, it presupposes recognition of genres, openings, episodes, closings and production of appropriate responses, including response stories mirroring themes, characters, stance and even lexical-syntactic structures from the foregoing story. Children must learn to produce and comprehend not just the standard *mhm* and *wow*, but also characteristic prefaces like *this one time*, climaxes like *and I said to myself 'this is it'*, and codas like *and the rest is history* as well as typical structural features of stories like repetition, details, and dialogue.

During the storytelling performance, both tellers and listeners produce evaluations and expressions of emotion. They share and compare attitudes toward and feelings about the events described. Sometimes a teller emotion *x* elicits a hearer emotion *x*, as when teller humor evokes listener humor, or sadness evokes sadness; but other times a teller emotion *x* elicits an appropriately paired listener emotion *y*, as when teller grief evokes listener sympathy or when the expression of guilt and contrition evokes understanding and forgiveness. Both tellers and listeners comment on the events in stories, evaluating actions and positioning themselves vis-à-vis goals and decisions described, agreeing and disagreeing, establishing rapport as well as personal and group identities.

The parameters of narrative in interaction emerge most clearly in the production of response stories in conversation. As they attend to stories told by others, listeners automatically recall parallel experiences and themes in their own life stories, then cobble them together into response stories matching those just told when they obtain the floor. Part of one's identity as a member of a group consists in responding the same way as others, sharing similar associations, and, when appropriate, remembering apposite stories of one's own. There is a fairly substantial literature on stories told specifically in response to other stories in conversation, especially Sacks' comments on second stories at various points in his lectures (1992), and Ryave's (1978) work on achieving a series of stories as well as my own work on response stories (Norrick 2000, 2010). Foregoing stories or series of stories place constraints on what can appropriately be told as a next story: in responding to a personal story with a story of one's own, the two must be topically coherent; in responding to a story about some third person, the next story should concern

the same person or another, perhaps related person, in a similar situation, reflecting the same basic theme and the same basic stance, if possible.

Recipients of personal stories often respond with 'me too' stories of their own, sometimes engaging in story topping to claim superiority for their own story. It is not rare for an erstwhile listener to produce her own story on a topic related to a story just told with a formulaic segue like *that reminds me of the time or the same thing happened to me*. In the excerpt below, two teenage girls are discussing relationships with boys. As Zoe finishes her story about a boy unacceptable for one reason, Mel tells a story about a boy she had to reject for a different reason, structuring her story so as to highlight its parallelism with the previous one.

(1)

- 22 Zoe: 'I mean-
 23 I think you be a well good mate and everything',
 24 and like it only lasted a couple of weeks,
 25 but he just go like-
 26 he's really think he was in love.
 27 and I was just like 'no, I don't want a relationship like that'.
 28 Mel: yeah.
 29 he's like the boy I went out with.
 30 when we went out in like a kind of group,
 31 I don't-
 32 I wouldn't be allowed to be friendly to other people.
 33 and apparently all he was going out with me was,
 34 because he wanted to have sex before he was seventeen.
 35 and I was like 'you have the wrong girl'.
 36 Zoe: yeah, exactly.
 (SCoSE, London Teenager Talk 5: Mel and Zoe)

In order to produce an appropriate response story, Mel must scan her memory for an experience she can plausibly offer as analogous to what Zoe has just narrated. Then she needs to remember pertinent details for narration, choosing parallel forms for 'transforming experience into narrative syntax'. Mel also positions herself with respect to her suitor and adopts the same stance toward the relationship as Zoe expressed. Notice particularly the initial formulation 'he's like the boy I went out with' in line 8 to introduce the objectively not so similar story, then again the similarity of the final reported speech in each case: Zoe's *and I was just like 'no, I don't want a relationship like that'* in line 27 and Mel's *and I was like 'you have the wrong girl'* in line 35, both introduced with the quotative phrase 'and I was like'. Zoe's final assessment *yeah, exactly* ratifies Mel's story as an appropriate response in any case.

2.2 Narrative and memory

Labov's original formulations 'oral versions of personal experience' (1967) and 'transforming experiences into talk' (1972), and his discussion in those essays foregrounded experience and talk, while they left remembering out of the picture, although his interviewers ask questions like: "What was the most important fight **you remember?**" (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 14), and his storytellers sometimes offer remarks such as: "Oh, yes. **I can remember real well.** I w=s just a girl. Fact, stayed with me quite a while" (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 14), showing that they recognize a relation between telling and remembering, even if the theoretical description proposed syncopates it. This raises the scintillating question of how we exploit memory for purposes of constructing narratives.

In his current work in progress on 'The language of life and death', Labov (forthcoming) speaks of 'narrators shaping the remembered reality to conform to their interests'. Here remembering comes to sound like a selective process of choosing salient aspects of remembered past experiences for re-use in constructing currently relevant stories: we construct a (currently relevant) past based on selective remembering. The cognitive processes of collecting relevant stored information for current use resembles Chafe's (1994) description of the process of remembering, of bringing 'clusters of ideas' into focus, of activating information (from semi-active or inactive states in the mind) into intonation units in the consciousness of the teller. According to Chafe, storytellers successively activate ideas through remembering in the construction of a narrative. This suggests a special kind of cognitive processing we can think of as 'remembering for narration', parallel to Slobin's 'thinking for speaking'.

In his research on differences between languages, Slobin (1987: 435) wrote:

The activity of thinking takes on a particular quality when it is employed in the activity of speaking. In the evanescent time frame of constructing utterances in discourse, one fits one's thoughts into available linguistic forms. ... 'Thinking for speaking' involves picking those characteristics that a) fit some conceptualization of the event, and b) are readily encodable in the language.

Not just the encoding of a perceived event, but also the act of narrating an experience will necessarily impose a particular form on the experience, and this form must influence both the way the experience is presented in the current context and the way the experience is internalized for future narrative encoding (cf. Slobin 1996). This perspective echoes and supports the view that the process of transforming an internalized experience into narrative in a particular language (register) and context affects the form of the story told and the way the experience is interpreted within the autobiographical identity of the teller.

Narration helps organize and makes sense of experiences, especially something like an automobile accident where everything happens so fast. In the excerpt

below Mary is telling for her family the course of the accident from the previous evening:

(2)

- 249 Mary: we really didn't think it was that ba:d.
 250 we were going all right.
 251 and then we rounded that curve and ...
 252 came out of the curve
 253 and he said
 254 "I started to accelerate out of the curve
 255 and ... hit that ice." (1.5)
 256 and he was in the other lane
 257 and I thought he was gonna get control of it ...
 258 and he-
 259 I thought he was turning to go back into our lane
 260 Ralph: m-hm
 261 Mary: but he said he was still trying to keep control of the FIShtail
 262 so he obviously ... overcorrected it
 263 like his father said
 264 because of the uh-
 265 tho- he's got a lot of play in his wheel
 266 and ... he said
 267 he probably just overcorrected it
 268 and that's what started our spin
 269 cause we spun this way. (2)
 270 then all the way around
 271 Amy: you spun this way, okay
 272 he went to this lane and then you spun that way.
 273 Mary: yeah.
 274 Amy: and then hit-
 275 Mary: he just continued you know to do
 276 sideways
 277 Ralph: spun all the way around? three sixty?
 278 Mary: yep.
 279 Pat: and so?
 280 Mary: it's so weird because you don't have time to be scared.
 (SCoSE. Complete Conversations, Mary at home)

Not just Mary but other family members work to clarify the story. This illustrates the phenomenon of group memory, where periodic rehearsal of a story helps to solidify the experience for participants. Notice how not just Mary but other family members join in, attempting to clarify the story. Consider particularly Amy saying

in lines 271–272: ‘you spun this way, okay. he went to this lane and then you spun that way’, followed by Mary’s confirmation ‘yeah’; and then Ralph’s questions ‘spun all the way around? three sixty?’ in line 277, which Mary again answers in the affirmative. Apparently Mary and her boyfriend Bryan have already told at least pieces of the story to Bryan’s father, cited in lines 262–263 as saying Bryan must have overcorrected it. Bryan’s own account of what happens also appears at two points: in lines 253–255 he is quoted, and again in lines 261 and 266–267, so Mary has already received significant input into her story from others before she presents it to her father and sister. Thus, the individual experiences woven into one’s life story (Brockmeier 2001) depend not just on remembering events, but are always a matter of reconstruction and re-evaluation based in part on narration for a particular audience and their contributions.

We can even speak of societal or cultural memory embodied in the stories members tell and retell (Brockmeier 2000; Brockmeier and Carbaugh (eds.) 2001; Wang and Brockmeier 2002). Individuals shape their separate experiences in various ways to fit into their life story and to connect their own life story to the history of their social groups and place (see Johnstone 1990, 1993). The institutional/scholarly instantiation of this is found in oral history, where individual narrative versions of past experiences are collected and collated. Here we find some research on how trustworthy reports of details and dialogue are, on talk about memory and forgetting during narrative performance, clarity of recall and related issues (Pillemer 2000; Oring 1987; Neisser (ed.) 1982). Norrick (2005a) considers data like the passage below from an oral history interview:

- (3) The whole band- this was the Abe Lyman Band. We went to Ames Iowa, and the dance band, they played for a dance at Ames Iowa. And then we went- I can’t remember just exactly ... to Lubbock Texas, and someplace else in New Mexico or something. No, that would- I haven’t thought about that for a long time.

SCoSE, Indianapolis Interviews, Babe Burton

We realize our memories are incomplete and fallible, but our individual narratives still necessarily form the basis for our sense of self through time, our autobiography within its cultural matrix (Bruner and Weisser 1991), including its situatedness within prevailing master narratives (Bamberg 2004, 2005).

Sometimes narrators may have to fill in gaps and re-imagine details as they piece together a story of a past experience. Remembering and retelling always require selecting and re-constructing (see Chafe 1998; Norrick 1998). Storytelling involves activating clusters of ideas, thereby re-conceptualizing past experience in current categories and language for current listeners. In personal stories, this may also entail filling in gaps where memory is fuzzy. Comments on remembering and forgetting can sometimes give us a look into how tellers fill in such gaps during the narrative process, e.g., in the passage below, where the teller admits not re-

membering what he thought, and then states outright that he is trying to ‘conjure up somewhat of an image’ in line 81. This is probably a pretty accurate description of much ‘remembering’ that goes on in constructing a narrative from long-past experiences. The process of telling a story from the distant past involves more than simple acts of remembering: the teller selects ‘clusters of ideas’ in Chafe’s sense, then synthesizes and serializes them in the light of current cognitive and contextual exigencies.

(4)

- 74 Barry: and I was told that I- I- I- um,
 75 was was going to,
 76 I was going with three other boys to a uh,
 77 a rabbi’s home,
 78 a rabbi who you know who had lived in Europe and lived in
 America.
 79 so I:,
 80 I don’t remember exactly what I thought {laugh} thirteen years
 ago.
 81 but I can- can conjure up somewhat of an image.
 82 of {laugh} like a little bit of,
 83 what I might have thought.
 84 and I- I- ha- I was little afraid,
 85 that um,
 86 Sarah: {laugh}
 87 Barry: {laugh} that you know um
 88 I’m going to this rabbi’s house,
 89 and he’s going to chastise me.
 90 he’s going to say you Jewish boy,
 91 what are doing with your life.
 92 you shouldn’t- you should do something with your life.
 93 for a change.
 94 you should (()) learn some Torah.
 95 what are you,
 96 what what is this.
 (CallHome, en 6179)

After candidly admitting that he does not really remember what he thought at the time in line 80, the storyteller Barry nevertheless engages in a fairly lengthy description of what might have gone through his mind in lines 87–96. Significantly, Barry adopts a clear stance in his conjuring, critical of his unengaged younger self from his current adult perspective: he positions himself toward a master narrative (in the sense of Bamberg 2004, 2005), in which being a Jewish boy, doing some-

thing with your life, and learning some Torah all hang together in particular, evaluated ways. Even when storytelling fails to access clear, complete memories, it seems to put the teller in a state of mind congenial to imagining appropriate thoughts and details – and expressing particular attitudes toward them. Thus, remembering and narrating a story can affect the form and content of that story as internalized and woven into one's autobiographical identity. The narrative practices of filling in gaps and conjuring up details based on background knowledge and imagination indicate that we do not have and apparently do not need complete stories in memory.

2.3 Conclusions on cognitive aspects of narrative discourse

We have surveyed cognitive aspects of narrative in verbal communication, focusing particularly on narrative in interaction and narrative and memory. Specifically, we have explored the strategies a participant in conversation employs and the kinds of help she receives in getting her story of a recent automobile accident straight. The story as narrated owes a great deal to interaction with others both since the accident and during the telling. We considered the mental processing described by storytellers in filling in gaps in memory and conjuring up details where memory failed. Again the conversational evidence suggests a large role for rational contextual construction and evaluation vis-à-vis reliance on memory. Moreover, in imagining details the teller potentially adopts a new stance toward the former self and past experience. As Bamberg (2006, 4) puts it in a discussion of Bruner's approach to life stories, 'biographies are not playbacks of life events but require a point of view from where past events are tied together and are made relevant for a here & now—with an eye on the biographer's future orientations'. Analysis of a story co-narrated by a young woman and other members of her family reveals her developing a personal narrative on the basis of plentiful input from the others. Autobiographical memory for experiences shared and later co-narrated by multiple participants must certainly bear the stamp of their interaction.

These various analyses provide evidence for the mitigated, contextual nature of initial personal story construction and again for the contextual pressures on remembering and re-telling. The practices of filling in gaps and conjuring details on the basis of general knowledge and imagination argue against complete stories in memory. The availability of story materials for non-narrative purposes suggests that what we commit to memory may not be as sequential and causal in organization as expected of narrative structures. Indeed, it seems almost counter-productive to maintain a complete monolithic narrative in memory, since it must be tailored to contextual conditions in each particular telling in any case. At the same time, multifarious correspondences between separate versions of the same story indicate surprisingly detailed memory for a specific story.

3 Social aspects of narration in verbal communication

Obvious social functions of narration in verbal communication are to break the ice in conversation, to exchange personal information, to inject humor and to entertain, modulating rapport and ratifying membership in a *Community of Practice* (Eckert 1989, 2000; cf. Wenger 1998). Storytelling is always bound up with identity display (Goffman 1981; Schiffrin 1996), not just in the stories ones tells, but how they are fitted into group interaction, and how listeners receive them and respond with stories of their own. Autobiographical memory is organized in narrative form (Bruner 2001; Brockmeier 2001; cf. Bamberg 2006). Storytelling enables identity display in conversation with family, friends and colleagues, through positioning (Bamberg 2004) the teller vis-à-vis characters in the storyworld and listeners in the interaction, expressing support or disapproval through assessing, agreeing and disagreeing (Raymond and Heritage 2006; Pomerantz 1984), for instance, a mother telling stories about her daughter (Gordon 2007; Tannen 2007; cf. Ochs and Taylor 1992), students in various cliques at school (Eckert 1989), young women talking about relationships (Georgakopoulou 2007). Co-narration, team performance (Norrick 2004), twice-told tales (Norrick 1997), collaborative fantasy (Norrick 2000) all accrue to bonding and high rapport (see also this volume, chapter 11). Not just telling but also listening practices serve the needs of identity display, aligning tellers and listeners, demonstrating (im)politeness and coordinating interaction through nodding, smiling, and laughing together.

In the following, I focus on two major areas of research of particular interest for the social aspect of narration in interaction, namely tellability within the group, and evaluation.

3.1 Tellability

The tellability of a story is something conversationalists negotiate in the given context, though in earlier approaches it was often viewed as an inherent property of the (detached) content of a story. Tellability is one of the gradient dimensions of narrative, in the sense of Ochs and Capps (2001), something negotiated by the teller and the listeners in particular local contexts. According to this earlier tradition, a story must be “reportable” or “tellable”: A would-be narrator must be able to defend the story as relevant and newsworthy to get and hold the floor and escape censure at its conclusion. Moreover, tellers do not simply relate events step by step; they characteristically stop the action at the climax for an evaluative comment, typically something like “and I said to myself, this is it.” Telling a story without evaluation or without a currently relevant point can lead to a loss of face for the teller, especially when the story is received with a scathing “what’s the point?”

Tellability is often equated with “local news” by tellers and listeners, in so far as their stories generally begin with some reference to a new or unexpected event, e.g., “the most gosh-awful wreck on the Ventura Freeway” (Sacks 1992). They also characteristically end with some final reference to the reportability of the story, as in the closing “It wasn’t in the paper last night. I looked.” The sort of news that makes a story salient today will no longer make it salient tomorrow. If you see a person every day at work, the sorts of news which count as tellable need not exceed the sort of thing one might hear on the evening news, but this same material will not suffice for a story to tell someone you see only every six months. As Sacks observes, stories about potential local news events seen or heard recently tend to be told first, then stories of personal accomplishment and experience since the last meeting occurred. Even when interlocutors run out of news, they can reminisce, telling old stories not for the sake of their content but for other reasons. A primary reason for telling a particular story in reminiscence is the opportunity for co-narration and laughing together (Norrick 1997, 2004).

According to more recent research perspectives, the tellability of a story depends not only on its (detached) content but also on its contextual (embedded) relevance for the participants involved. Thus, family dinner-table talk reveals children routinely telling familiar stories and relating unnewsworthy tales at the request of their parents as a part of the socialization process. Indeed, conversationalists often tell stories familiar to some or even all their listeners, and it is precisely the familiarity of story content which influences participation rights, since it presents the opportunity for significant co-narration. Familiar funny stories are typically prefaced in ways which label them as unoriginal (e.g., “remember the time we ...”) and yet these signals animate participants to involvement rather than cuing them to question the relevance and tellability of the stories. The tellability of familiar stories hinges not on their content as such but on the dynamics of the narrative event itself, and humor makes co-narration desirable.

In his consideration of the ‘dark side’ of tellability, Norrick (2005) observes that some stories, though eminently tellable in their extra-ordinary content, are not tellable for many tellers under most circumstances, because they are too personal, too embarrassing, or obscene. Some newsworthy personal experiences are for that very reason untellable, because they would be embarrassing to the teller, the listeners, or both. Even if tellability is often equated with local news, and a story about “the most gosh-awful wreck on the Ventura Freeway” is tellable as news, at some point the gruesome details of the wreck with the dead and injured, the blood and guts may go beyond the tellable into the area of the no longer tellable. Conversationalists may tell transgressive stories “in the pursuit of intimacy,” pushing the envelope of propriety in order to modulate rapport, attending to cues like laughter to avoid rushing beyond acceptable standards (Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff 1987; cf. Jones 2002; Coupland & Jaworski 2003). In relating a transgressive experience, the teller risks rejection on two levels: the other participants may refuse to listen

to the offensive story; and they may negatively judge the teller for the behavior reported. On the positive side, the teller may gain the listener's admiration for the experience reported, may modulate intimacy through self-disclosure, and may inspire the listener to reply with similar self-disclosure. Tellability is, then, a two-sided notion: Some events bear too little significance to reach the lower-bounding threshold of tellability, while others are so intimate (or frightening) that they lie on the dark side of tellability. The conversational narrator navigates the path between these two boundaries in various ways. Storytellers may worry about the scathing 'so what?' (Polyani 1979: 19 ff.), following a story with no clear point or significance, but there is often more shame in transgressing norms than in telling a boring story. The societal sanctions for obscenity are more immediate and obvious than those for telling pointless stories: responses to the former are immediate and unmistakable reprimands like "You can't talk like that here!" while responses to the latter are ambiguous long-term behaviors such as avoidance. Within the scope of expectations about appropriate experiences to relate and appropriate ways of telling, narrators and their audiences co-construct their individual personalities and relationships through their negotiation of the upper boundary of tellability and their joint evaluation of the characters and events described.

3.2 Evaluation

Evaluating persons and events being described are social, highly interactive phenomena (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992; Gordon 2007; cf. Pomerantz 1984). Evaluation was recognized as a typical feature of narratives of personal experience by Labov and Waletzky (1967: 29). Labov and Waletzky define evaluation as "the part of the narrative that reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative" (1967: 32). Evaluation in narrative turns a mere series of events into a story that reflects the teller's personal and cultural values and point of view. Labov (1972: 366) says that evaluation is "perhaps the most important element in addition to the basis narrative clause ...: the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its *raison d'être*: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at", and he goes on to describe various types of evaluation in personal narratives. Evaluation can be either external in the form of explicit assessments or internal in the form of dialogue, repetition and formulaicity. There has been considerable research on evaluation in stories from Labov onwards (Tannen 1984; Polanyi 1985; Fleischman 1990; Toolan 1988; Linde 1993; Daiute and Nelson 1997; Wennerstrom 2001, among many others). Norrick (2010) focuses on the evaluation supplied by listeners, and on how storytellers respond to it.

Labov distinguished internal and external evaluation, but we shall see that evaluation can be doubly external, in the sense that it may originate in contributions from listeners to be incorporated into the performance of the principal storyteller. This observation suggests clearly that evaluation emerges as a part of the

process of narration rather than inhering in the *taleworld*, as described by Young (1987). According to Young, any performance of personal narrative constitutes two types of self presentation: of the narrator as a character in the story, and of an identity as a storyteller in the present context. Young developed the distinction between the taleworld and the *storyrealm*; that is, between the events in the story and the presentation of those events in the form of a story (1987: 21). In first person narrative, the pronouns *I* and *me* act as a pivot between these provinces, referring both to a character in the taleworld and to the teller in the storyrealm. For a young teller talking about a recent experience, there may be little difference between the character-*me* and the teller-*me*, but for an elderly teller who is describing personal experiences in a taleworld long ago, the teller-*me* often differs greatly from the character-*me*. The tension between these two identities provides natural stuff for evaluation, evincing one sense in which evaluation emerges as a product of the storytelling performance.

Moreover, during a story performance the listeners can have a say as well. Storytellers may accept listener evaluations and incorporate them into their stories, but listeners may evaluate a story from different perspectives and at different points in the narrative than principal tellers, and this again highlights the interactive character of evaluation. Not only do tellers design their narrative performance for a particular context, tailoring their evaluation to the current recipients, but these recipients may also contribute actively to the evaluation of the story, and the teller can in turn react to their contributions in nuanced ways. To cite an example, in the passage below the storyteller offers evaluations of her own, but she also picks up evaluations from her listener and works them into her narrative. The two parties involved are good friends catching up with each others' lives during an extended telephone call. As she tells her story, Bea says how 'great' the experience was in line 1 and how 'nice and arty' the people were in line 3, then she acknowledges and integrates the assessments her friend proposes not only in the form of single words such as 'refreshing' in lines 4–5, but also in the form of phrases like 'good for the soul' in lines 14–15, as well as generally positive evaluations like 'oh that's wonderful' in line 11, which transmutes into 'it was really great' in line 12.

(5)

- 1 Bea: it was just so great to be outdoors.
- 2 with all these sort of you know,
- 3 nice people and arty people and,
- 4 Ally: **well that was refreshing.**
- 5 Bea: **it was very refreshing.**
- 6 and then it went into the night.
- 7 so I was out there at night wi-
- 8 Ally: yeah.
- 9 Bea: stars and the moon.

- 10 and we had a campfire and singing and all that.
 11 Ally: **oh that's wonderful.**
 12 Bea: **it was really great.**
 13 it was very,
 14 Ally: **good for the soul.**
 15 Bea: **yeah really good for the soul.**
 16 Ally: yeah.
 (CallHome, en 4822)

While Bea is clearly the primary speaker, Ally provides very frequent assessments of the actions Bea describes; Ally even completes an utterance of Bea's for her in lines 13–14, showing how closely she is following the progress of the story. In turn, Bea responds to these assessments, integrating them into her ongoing story performance in various ways, resulting in a heavily evaluated story overall and in high rapport interaction. Of course, storytellers may sometimes just acknowledge assessments contributed by recipients with a cursory “yeah” or ratify them with “I know” or something similar, just as they sometimes react to recipient assessments with evaluative comments of their own as well.

3.3 Conclusions on social aspects of narrative discourse

Exploration of tellability and evaluation in storytelling reveal multifarious social aspects of narration in verbal communication. Tellability and evaluation are aspects of storytelling dependent on and constitutive for such social functions as breaking the ice, exchanging personal information, entertaining, identifying group values, goals, and expectations. Positioning oneself, claiming membership in and delineating boundaries in communities of practice, reciprocally depend upon how listeners offer assessment and how tellers ratify and incorporate them into their storytelling performances. Tellability is Janus-like with both a lower-bounding threshold, ensuring that a story sufficiently transcends quotidian expectations, and an upper-bounding limit, forbidding stories too intimate or frightening on the ‘dark side’ of what is tellable in the current context. Conversational narrators negotiate these boundaries with their listeners from one context to the next. Evaluation in narrative may begin with the primary teller, but listeners will react to their evaluations and perhaps provide evaluations of their own for the teller to accept or reject and perhaps to incorporate into the ongoing narrative.

4 Methodological issues and applications

Methodologically, the study of narration in interaction begins with Labov's research on stories elicited in an interview situation. Labov essentially built a specific

version of tellability into his corpus by requesting stories on topics like important fights and near-death experiences, and he defined a minimal narrative as at least two past tense clauses in irreversible order. Later researchers have objected both to Labov's method of elicitation and his narrow definition of narrative. As Schegloff (1997: 104) puts it in a collection of papers published in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of Labov and Waletzky's path-breaking study, we might "entertain the possibility that the constitutive practices of storytelling incorporate recipients and that storytelling abstracted from its interactional setting, occasioning, and uptake is an academically hybridized form". Conversation Analysis stresses audience design and the sequential organization of storytelling in talk-in-interaction, viewing each narrative as a situated, emergent performance (Sacks 1992). A complete account of conversational storytelling must take into consideration the contributions of recipients and show how they are incorporated into the narrative performance in its interactional setting (Norrick 2010).

Ochs and Capps (2001) discuss a whole range of new perspectives to move beyond the traditional view of narrative as single teller production. By contrast with Labov's insistence on past tense clauses in strictly sequential order, Chafe (1994) has demonstrated the significance of various linguistic factors besides sequence in the organization and remembering of stories, Hopper (1997) questions the ontological assumptions behind a posited underlying sequential order of discrete events in memory which are recapitulated in storytelling, and Bamberg (2005) argues that events, scenes, actors and actions are products of more global discourse activities rather than prerequisites for them. Labov's narrow definition has given way to looser frameworks such as the small stories approach (Bamberg 2006, 2008; Georgakopoulou 2007; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; cf. Norrick 2000), while other researchers have shown the importance of wider perspectives, for instance Bruner on the narrative construction of reality (1987, 1991) and Linde on life stories (1993). Fludernik (1993, 1996) extrapolates from conversational storytelling to narrative in literary genres in insightful ways.

At the same time, we find scholarly interest in developmental patterns in narrative performance across the life span. First, there is research using elicited narrative productions from children as in the "frog story" experiments (Bamberg 1987; Berman and Slobin 1994). Then one finds investigation of narrative skills in children, based e.g., on data from family dinner-table talk where children relate stories at the request of their parents as a part of the socialization process (Ochs et al. 1989; Blum-Kulka 1993; and Blum-Kulka and Snow 1992). At the other end of the developmental curve, Matsumoto (2009, 2011) and Norrick (2009) have examined narrative and identity in elderly storytellers.

Cognitive narratology is a fairly recent development concerned with storytelling practices in its relation to mind (Herman 2009). Cognitive narratology studies narrative and mind in print texts, face-to-face interaction, cinema, radio and television broadcasts, computer-mediated virtual environments, and other storytelling

media. It borrows eclectically from reader response theory, as described by Ingarden (1973), Iser (1978) and others, scripts/schema theory, with its roots in the thinking of Bateson (1953) and Goffman (1974), but developed for narrative in conversation by Tannen (1978, 1979), discursive psychology, as elaborated by Edwards and Middleton (1986), Middleton and Edwards (1990) and elsewhere to describe emotion, temporality and related aspects of narrative (see Eder 2003; Ryan 2004; Herman 2007; Keen 2007).

Recently the forms and functions of narration in talk at work have been receiving increasing attention (see Muller 1997; Taylor et al. 2011). These studies have shown that organizational narratives provide perfect sites for investigating ‘individual and collective action and meanings, as well as the process through which social life and human relationships are made and changed’ (Laslett 1999: 392). Taking a narrative pragmatic approach allows examination not only of *what* people do with narratives in talk at work (that is the functions of narratives) but also *how* people do it in a moment-by-moment unfolding of a narrative (see Holmes 2005, Holmes 2006). Issues of power and gender arise in narrative interaction in talk at work, while narratives also reveal patterns of cooperate identity and cooperate culture.

5 Conclusions

The treatment of cognitive aspects of narrative discourse centered, first, on narrative and memory and, second, on narrative in interaction. We explored the strategies and mental processing participants in conversation employ to get a story straight. The conversational evidence suggests a large role for rational contextual construction and evaluation vis-à-vis reliance on memory.

The consideration of social aspects of narrative discourse focused, first, on tellability and, second, on evaluation. Tellability and evaluation in storytelling both depend on and help constitute such social functions as breaking the ice, exchanging personal information, entertaining, identifying group values, goals, and expectations.

Finally, the discussion of methodological issues and applications mustered perspectives on the study of spoken narrative from Labov onwards, touching on developmental narratology, along with newer approaches to storytelling such as cognitive narratology, and recent research on narrative in talk at work.

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13 Argumentation and communicative practices

Abstract: In this chapter, we give an overview of the approaches to the study of argumentation which concentrate on various communicative and interactional practices of arguing. First, attention is paid to the way in which the perspective of discourse analysis and conversation analysis can be helpful in dealing with argumentative texts and discussions. Next, we focus on approaches in which the rhetorical perspective on argumentation is used to study exemplary speech events. Finally, we turn to the pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation, which integrates a philosophical, a theoretical, an empirical, an analytical, and a practical component into a coherent approach, and the semantic-pragmatic perspective on argumentation which connects with the pragma-dialectical perspective.

Keywords: Communicative practices, pragma-linguistic perspectives, rhetorical perspectives, pragma-dialectical perspective, semantic-pragmatic perspective

1 The study of argumentation

Argumentation is one of the most common phenomena in communicating with each other. We employ argumentation on a daily basis to justify our views and opinions and to convince others of the acceptability of our positions. We do so in formally regulated communicative practices such as legal proceedings, but also in less formal types of communication at work and in the informal exchanges we have with family and friends. Whether we want to convince a judge that we did not commit the act we are accused of, our colleagues that we have to set certain priorities, or a friend that she should see a certain movie, we employ arguments to convince them that our points of view are acceptable.

Argumentation is advanced to resolve a difference of opinion between the speaker or writer and the people they address. In the communication between the parties the difference of opinion may have been externalized but it may also be presumed to exist, so that the argumentation is put forward in anticipation. More often than not only one of the parties involved expresses an opinion, whether explicitly or implicitly, and the other party doubts whether they should accept this opinion or is supposed to doubt this. More complex cases come into being when both parties have a standpoint and try to convince each other, or a neutral audience, of the correctness of their view.

Although there are different views as to how argumentation should be understood, most scholars seem to agree on some general characteristics (van Eemeren et al. 2014). Firstly, argumentation is viewed as a *communicative act complex* consisting of a combination of communicative moves put forward in defence of a standpoint. As a rule, these moves are verbal in nature and can be characterized as speech acts, but they can also be partly or wholly non-verbal, particularly visual.

Second, argumentation is seen as an *interactional act complex* directed at eliciting a response from the other party that indicates acceptance of the standpoint that is defended. Viewed in this way, argumentation is always part of an explicit or implicit dialogue with a real or imagined interlocutor who is in doubt about the acceptability of the standpoint that is defended.

Third, argumentation consists of a constellation of propositions involving *commitments* assumed by the party advancing the argumentation. Depending on the propositions which are put forward in the argumentation and the way in which they relate to the standpoint that is defended, the arguer can be held accountable for having a specific set of commitments.

Fourth, argumentation involves an appeal to *a rational critic who judges reasonably*.¹ People who put forward argumentation are first and foremost out to convince their addressees of the acceptability of the standpoint defended by making them see that their argumentation meets certain mutually shared critical standards. In this endeavour they assume that in principle the other party is capable of judging the soundness of their argumentation reasonably.²

These general features of argumentation can be captured in a definition which combines the process dimension of argumentation as a communicative and interactional act complex aimed at resolving a difference of opinion with the product dimension of argumentation as a constellation of propositions designed to resolve the difference of opinion by making the standpoint at issue acceptable to a rational judge who judges reasonably:

Argumentation is a communicative and interactional act complex aimed at resolving a difference of opinion with the addressee by putting forward a constellation of propositions the arguer can be held accountable for to make the standpoint at issue acceptable to a rational judge who judges reasonably (van Eemeren et al. 2014: Section 1).

¹ For the distinction between *rational* and *reasonable* see van Eemeren (2008). Being rational involves in his view using the faculty to reason; being reasonable refers to doing so in an appropriate manner. Cf. Perelman's (1979) view.

² Just like any other communicative and interactional act, argumentation can be used improperly. Instead of being reasonable, arguers may, for instance, be primarily interested in making a favourable impression on an audience, as when two political rivals are engaged in an electoral debate. However, if their discussion with each other is to be taken seriously by others, they need to act reasonably or maintain at least the appearance of being engaged in a reasonable discussion (van Eemeren et al. 2014).

The study of argumentative discourse aimed at resolving a difference of opinion in a reasonable way does not only have a descriptive dimension, but also a normative dimension. This means that scholars of argumentation must combine an empirical orientation towards how argumentation is actually conducted with a critical reflection upon how it should be conducted. If the descriptive study of communication and interaction is designated in the usual way as *pragmatics*, because of the need for combining descriptive research with normative research, the study of argumentation can be construed as a branch of *normative pragmatics* (van Eemeren 1986, 1990). In this branch of normative pragmatics argumentation theorists make it their business to connect the normative and the descriptive dimensions of the study of argumentation by systematically integrating in their theorizing empirical and critical insights.

The problems involved in combining the two dimensions can be only solved by means of a comprehensive research program consisting of five interrelated components: a philosophical, a theoretical, an empirical, an analytical, and a practical component (van Eemeren 1987; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 9–41). On the one hand, in the philosophical component a conception of reasonableness needs to be developed that is adequate for judging argumentative discourse.³ In addition, in the theoretical component a model of argumentation needs to be developed that can serve heuristic, analytic and critical functions in the descriptive and normative study of argumentative discourse. On the other hand, to understand how argumentative discourse develops, in the empirical component a justified description of argumentative reality must be provided based on qualitative and quantitative research. Next, the philosophical, theoretical and empirical insights should be brought together in the analytical component by means of a methodical reconstruction of argumentative discourse as it occurs in argumentative reality. In this way a sound basis is created for tackling and improving the various kinds of argumentative practices in the practical component of the research program.

In the end, the general objective of argumentation theory is to provide the instruments required for analyzing, evaluating and producing argumentative discourse in an adequate way. Viewed from this general objective, the *raison d'être* of all components of the comprehensive research program eventually is that they enable us to develop such instruments. In the following sections we will outline how the results achieved in the various components of the research program are

³ Toulmin (1976), one of the founding fathers of modern argumentation theory, distinguished among three conceptions of reasonableness: 1. an *anthropological* conception, which starts from what is considered reasonable by the members of a certain communicative community and generally results in a rhetorical model for argumentation; 2. a *geometrical* conception, which is aimed at preserving certainty and developing a model of argumentation providing universal standards for assessing the truth of standpoints; 3. a *critical* conception, which boils down to adopting a dialectical procedure for testing systematically the tenability of standpoints.

brought to bear in dealing with the problems of analysing and evaluating argumentative discourse by explaining some prominent approaches to the study of argumentation. In each approach the perspective on argumentation that is chosen and the theoretical angle that is taken determine together how the various components are put to good use in realizing the descriptive and normative aims of the study of argumentation. In our expose we shall focus on approaches to the study of argumentation which concentrate on the communicative and interactional practices of argumentation. First, we pay attention to the way in which the perspective of discourse analysis and conversation analysis can be helpful in dealing with argumentative texts and discussions. Next, we focus on approaches in which the rhetorical perspective on argumentation is used to study exemplary speech events. Finally, we turn to the pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation, which integrates the five necessary components of argumentation research into a coherent approach, and the semantic-pragmatic perspective on argumentation which connects with the pragma-dialectical perspective.

2 A pragma-linguistic perspective on argumentation

Argumentation is often, especially in the United States, a central object of study for scholars of communication. Already since the early part of the twentieth century there has been a great interest among communication scholars in the practical skills of debating and public speaking. This purely practical enterprise led to the development of several theoretical insights into argumentation. In the 1980s some scholars complemented this interest in the practical component of the study of argumentation with the empirical study of argumentation as a linguistic communicative practice. In order to understand what “good” argumentation involves, they examined argumentative practices, taking account of all the details of the actual messages.

In tackling the problem of reconstructing arguments in such a way that becomes clear what exactly has been conveyed, Scott Jacobs (1998), for one, emphasizes that due attention needs to be paid to “the total message” that is expressed, the *expressive design*. Starting from this expressive design, he analyses in his essays the *functional design* of argumentation. In his view, arguments may be designed to encourage or to discourage a critical scrutiny of the functional design: the justification of positions and alternative positions. An important insight that scholars such as Jacobs have contributed to the theoretical component of the study of argumentation is that argumentation is a *self-regulating activity*:

Argumentative discourse can function not merely to persuade, but also to encourage mutual, voluntary, free, comprehensive, open, fair, impartial, considered, reasoned, informed, reflec-

tive, and involved engagement. On this view, the problems of how to determine the substance of good reasons, the form of good reasoning, and the status of any conclusion are all, to a large degree, left open to those deliberating the issue (Jacobs 2000: 274).

Following their interest in the expressive and the functional design of argumentative discourse, Jacobs examined together with Sally Jackson interpersonal arguments to determine the strategies involved in the different ways in which arguers increase or reduce disagreements in various contexts and the effects of using these strategies. The argumentative practices they concentrated on range from informal family interactions to more formal practices such as mediation (Jacobs & Jackson 1981, 1982, 1983). In the model they use for analyzing argumentative discourse every verbal utterance is seen as a speech act instrumental in achieving various kinds of goals. Ultimately, the research by Jackson and Jacobs is aimed at tracing the knowledge needed to “play the game” of communication, which they represent formally in a *structural model of discourse*.

In their research, Jackson and Jacobs have three methodological starting points. The first is a commitment to naturalism: They consider naturally occurring talk as the object of their research. The second starting point is direct inspection of the details of actual discourse: They prefer concepts and categories to emerge from, and to be justified by, detailed observation to the application of categorical coding schemes that render discourse into sequences of act types stripped of details of content. The third starting point involves a preference of inductive theory-building over deductive hypothesis-testing: The research questions are to emerge from an examination of the empirical details of the discourse.

The structural model of argumentative discourse at the core of Jackson and Jacobs’s work is based on sequencing rules inspired by the turn-taking model of conversation analysts such as Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (1974). Jackson and Jacobs, too, view the conventional pairing of utterances in terms of *adjacency pairs*. In their structural model argument is treated as a “repair and prepare” mechanism, designed to regulate the appearance of disagreement in a rule system aimed to do justice to the natural *preference for agreement*. Modeling argument in this way results in the exposition of a generative mechanism flexible enough to avoid the more obvious anomalies of chain models of interaction applied in group discussion research.

This structural model however proves, as Jacobs and Jackson (1989: 161) observe, to be insufficient for explaining exactly what happens in the process of communication when arguing.⁴ For this reason they developed a model in which more

⁴ First, various kinds of coherent replies to first pair parts do not fit the category of a second pair part. Second, the concept of an adjacency pair relation does not provide an adequate basis for identifying pairs: There is no principled way of identifying which pair parts should be paired together and which not. Third, the adjacency pair analysis cannot explain what types of utterances can and cannot initiate an adjacency pair. Fourth, a sequencing rule model offers no principled way of determining what utterances can and cannot be structurally subordinate expansions. Fifth,

attention is paid to the function of arguments. In this model, the felicity conditions of speech acts are used to explain the pairing of arguments. The first pair part and the second pair part are then seen in terms of mirror-image felicity conditions. Generally people do not interpret and respond to each other's contributions to the discourse in terms of types of acts being performed, but in terms of perceived goals and plans of the communicator. Therefore Jackson and Jacobs propose to view conversation as "a process of coordinating plans and negotiating meaning rather than as product of people interlocking their rules for issuing and interpreting actions" (Jacobs & Jackson 1989: 164). In this approach, speech acts are seen as conventional means for achieving goals that may be sub-goals in a broader structure or plan (1989: 165).⁵

Relying also on an account in terms of speech acts, Fred Kauffeld has examined the way in which in everyday argumentative interaction a burden of proof is incurred. He tries to explain how this special kind of probative obligation is incurred in conformity with what he calls the *Principle of Pragmatically Incurred Obligations*. According to this principle, in serious human communication pragmatically necessary presumptions are strategically engaged by openly manifesting intentions regarding the addressee, incurring corresponding obligations in the process (Kauffeld 2009: 8). Kauffeld's research concentrates on illocutionary acts such as *accusing* and *proposing*, which typically involve undertaking argumentative obligations. According to Kauffeld, the presumption of innocence imposes a burden of proof on arguers who accuse the interlocutor of having done something wrong: They have to provide evidence which rebuts the interlocutor's expected appeal against the accusation. Similarly, arguers who make a proposal will have to give reasons in its support to meet the interlocutor's presumption that the proposal is not favourable.

Other American communication scholars have taken a kind of empirical approach to argumentation which is more or less in line with the approaches developed by Jacobs, Jackson and Kauffeld. Under the label *normative pragmatics* (van Eemeren 1986, 1990), scholars such as Jean Goodwin and Beth Innocenti (Manolescu 2006) concentrate on describing the norms actually used by arguers in different contexts in dealing with argumentation. As an illustration, Goodwin refers to forensic argumentation in the courtroom and deliberative argumentation in public policy. In a forensic situation, she observes, representations of facts "must be based solely on the matters of fact of which evidence has already been introduced" (Goodwin 2005: 101). In a deliberative situation, arguments are adequate when they are "beyond criticism" (Goodwin 2005: 109).

there is an apparently limitless diversity of sequential expansions. As a consequence, no taxonomy of patterns can ever encompass all possible patterns (Jacobs & Jackson 1989: 161).

⁵ In this way Jackson and Jacobs's work in discourse analysis has developed closer to the pragmatodialectical perspective of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, with whom they co-authored the monograph *Reconstructing argumentative discourse* (van Eemeren et al. 1993).

Independently, a descriptive empirical approach to argumentative discourse is also adopted in France by Marianne Doury.⁶ She uses insights from conversation analysis to explain “the discursive and interactional devices used by speakers who face conflicting standpoints and need to take a stand in such a way as to hold out against contention” (Doury 2009: 143).⁷ Just like Goodwin, Doury is interested in describing argumentative norms adhered to in argumentative practices. She focuses on the norms revealed by observation of polemical exchanges in communicative settings such as everyday conversations, TV talk shows, internet newsgroups, letters to the editor, and public debates. Her aim is to find out to which extent theoretical categories and classifications of argumentative phenomena, such as *argument schemes* and *fallacies*, have their counterparts in empirical reality. For this purpose she investigates discursive clues which may reveal such commonalities. A good example is her empirical descriptive research regarding the parallels between scholarly conceptions of *argumentation based on comparison* and ordinary arguers’ conceptions of such arguments (Doury 2009). In this investigation Doury makes an inventory of explicit designations of comparison argumentation (such as the use of the word “compare”), indicators of this type of argumentation (such as “it’s like saying”), and refutations of the comparison (such as observations by other participants in the discussion that “the comparison is not suitable”).

3 A rhetorical perspective on argumentation

A great many communication scholars interested in argumentation are rhetorically-oriented. Because they describe various forms of argumentative practices and discuss ways to improve them, their research is to a large extent situated in the empirical or the practical component of the research program we sketched at the beginning of our overview. These scholars concentrate on the ways in which arguers try to persuade or convince others by the use of specific linguistic (and sometimes non-linguistic) devices. As a rule, they are strongly influenced by the rhetorical

⁶ Among a substantial group of European researchers, particularly those based in the French-speaking world, a descriptive approach to argumentation is traditional. Some of them continue the linguistic approach started in the 1980s by Jean-Claude Anscombe and Oswald Ducrot (1983). Others, such as Plantin (1997) and Doury (1997), build on this approach but are also – and often more strongly – influenced by conversation analysis and discourse analysis.

⁷ Doury’s descriptive approach is strongly influenced by Christian Plantin’s work on a dialogical model of argumentation including elements of classical rhetoric. In this model, the argumentative situation is characterized as an interaction between a speaker advancing a point of view which he needs to defend and an interlocutor expressing doubt for which a burden of proof is also incurred. For a more elaborate account of this model, see Plantin (2005).

tradition. Particularly in the United States this tradition has survived remarkably well.

In the nineteenth century, American communication and rhetoric studies developed as a result of the growing interest in the practical skills of debating and public speaking. This development was in the first place due to the already existing tradition of debate and eloquence, inherited from the British in colonial times. A second factor contributing to the rise of public speaking was that many considered it essential for effective citizenship. The transformation of the United States to a mass democratic society at the beginning of the twentieth century required in their view education in rhetoric and argumentation for active citizen participation. Debating was primarily seen as a pedagogical device – a form of practical training for careers in law, government, and politics. Argumentation was seen, more generally, as a body of citizenship skills.

Without necessarily sharing a common theoretical perspective on argumentation these communication and rhetoric scholars are for the most part concerned with how people use certain claims in various kinds of argumentative practices to obtain assent or achieve consensus. According to David Zarefsky (1995: 43), their common characteristic is that they examine “the practice of justifying decisions under conditions of uncertainty.” Studying argumentation as a *practice* requires viewing argumentative discourse as a social activity in which texts are advanced and responded to – these texts are then studied as products of this practice. The fact that argumentation is examined as a practice of *justifying* claims suggests that these rhetoricians, unlike scholars examining logical proof, do not envisage the outcome of argumentation in terms of certainty. Moreover, since argumentation is viewed as a practice of justifying *decisions*, it is concerned with choices and the need for making choices. It is the need for making choices under *conditions of uncertainty* – i.e. when not everything can be known – which these scholars consider the defining characteristic of a *rhetorical situation*.

Public speech as the product of a practice of argumentation is for rhetorically oriented communication scholars the object of investigation *par excellence*. Michael Leff and Gerald Mohrmann (1993), for example, provided a systematic analysis of Lincoln’s speech at Cooper Union. Their first observation is that the characteristics of this speech make it clear that it belongs to the specific genre of a campaign oration: speeches designed to win nomination for the speaker. Next, they point to the specific argumentative strategies and stylistic means which are used in the speech to achieve the purpose of the genre. By demonstrating that he is a man of reason, the authors observe, Lincoln tries to become a spokesman for his party. The strategy he follows consists of often quoting his main opponent, following his logic, and then turning it against him by means of a fallacious personal attack.

Public discourse is also central to Zarefsky’s work, which combines classical rhetorical insights with insights from modern rhetoric in giving an analysis of the argumentation used in public texts. In *President Johnson’s War on Poverty*, Zarefsky

(1986/2005) examines how public policy was presented strategically to the American public by declaring “an unconditional war on poverty” – an idea which initially became very popular, but lost its appeal later on. According to Zarefsky, the rhetorical choices made in *declaring a war on poverty* constitute the main reasons for both success and decline. The symbolic choice for waging a “war” and all the other choices associated with it – needing “soldiers,” fighting the “enemy,” conducting a “battle” – suggest a specific view of the world. By highlighting some aspects and diminishing others, these choices “evoke support or opposition by virtue of their association with an audience’s prior experience and belief” (Zarefsky 1986/2005: 5).

In *Lincoln Douglas and slavery*, Zarefsky (1990) analyses the seven encounters which took place in 1858 between Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the Republican party, and Stephen A. Douglas, the incumbent senator seeking reelection, which have become known as the *Lincoln-Douglas debates*. Debates of this kind are often seen as the paradigm case of political debate, but Zarefsky considers this a “generally implausible” judgment which is “not supported by the record.” In his rhetorical analysis, he focuses on how the speakers “selected their arguments and appeals from the available means of persuasion and how they shaped and fashioned the arguments to meet the needs of the audience and situation” (Zarefsky 1990: xi). This perspective on the debates helped Zarefsky to explain “how linguistic and strategic choices both reflected and affected the course of the deepening controversy over slavery” (1990: xi).

A rhetorical approach to arguments is also characteristic of Edward Schiappa’s work, a case in point being his case study of the arguments concerning the definition of *person* and *human life* advanced in the context of the American constitutional disputes on abortion in the wake of the *Roe v. Wade case* (Schiappa 2002). In Schiappa’s view, “definitions always function to serve particular interests,” and “the only definitions of consequence are those that have been empowered through persuasion or coercion” (2002: 75). Schiappa provides a rhetorical analysis of the way in which the Supreme Court treats the questions of definition. He shows that the questions “What is a person?” and “What is human life?” – both allowing for infinite answers – are sidestepped. They are turned into a “more productive and answerable” question or the parties are left room “to offer – through persuasion but not coercion – competing answers” (Schiappa 2002: 78).

Gradually a growing number of American rhetorical scholars have shifted their attention away from public discourse to the *theory of inquiry*. Their basic assumption is that science, too, is governed by rhetoric. In line with this view, scholars such as Barry Brummett (1999) have contributed to the emerging belief that truth is relative to argument and to audience. They stimulated examining what sorts of knowledge are rhetorically constructed and how arguing produces knowledge. Among the answers that were proposed is the claim that all knowledge is rhetorical and that there are no standards transcending the rhetorical. Taking a stance like this is in fact only one step removed from the radical view that in fact everything

can be approached with rhetoric, which has led to the name *Big Rhetoric* (Schiappa 2001: 260).

4 A pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation

The pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation developed in Amsterdam is not only both normative and descriptive but also does justice to all components of the research program mentioned in our introduction. According to Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst (1984, 1992, 2004), the founders of the theory, argumentation is aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits by means of a critical exchange of argumentative moves between the protagonist of the standpoint at issue and an antagonist who has doubt as to the acceptability of this standpoint or even rejects it. Characteristically, in the pragma-dialectical theory argumentation is viewed from a perspective combining a communicative angle inspired by *pragmatic* insights from speech act theory and discourse analysis with a critical angle inspired by *dialectical* insights from critical rationalism and dialogue logic.

To connect the dialectical insights pertaining to the normative dimension of argumentation in an adequate way with the pragmatic insights pertaining to the descriptive dimension, the pragma-dialectical research needs to do justice to all five components of the research program of argumentation theory. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 2004) do so by adopting a critical rationalist philosophy of reasonableness and viewing argumentative exchanges as being part of a regimented critical discussion aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Because speech acts which violate any of the rules for a critical discussion hinder the resolution of a difference of opinion on the merits, they view all argumentative moves involving the performance of such speech acts as *fallacies* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992; van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 123–157).⁸

In the theoretical component of their research, the pragma-dialecticians give substance to their philosophical starting points by developing an ideal model of a critical discussion which specifies the stages the resolution process has to go through, the types of speech acts that can be instrumental moves in each of these stages, and the rules of critical discussion constituting the code of conduct that needs to be observed to prevent fallacies from occurring (van Eemeren & Grooten-

⁸ In principle, the pragma-dialectical “code of conduct” for reasonable discussants in which the rules for critical discussion are summarized provides all the standards pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits and therefore covers all fallacies that can be committed in argumentative discourse. See van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 93–217. Verify the number of pages because 93–217 seems too much.

dorst 1984, 2004). In a critical discussion four stages need to be distinguished. The discussion is initiated, in the *confrontation stage*, by the manifestation of a difference of opinion in which a standpoint is confronted with non-acceptance. After the discussion roles of protagonist and antagonist have been divided, in the *opening stage*, the substantive and procedural commitments are identified that can be considered as starting points of the discussion. The protagonist defends the standpoint at issue, in the *argumentation stage*, against the antagonist's critical responses to the standpoint and the arguments put forward in its defence.⁹ In the *concluding stage*, the protagonist and the antagonist determine whether the protagonist's standpoint has been defended successfully against the critical responses of the antagonist.

Starting from the classification of types of speech acts proposed by John Searle (1969: 1–29), van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) determined which speech acts can play a constitutive role in the four stages of a critical discussion. In the confrontation stage, *assertives* serve to advance standpoints and *commissives* to indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of a standpoint. In the opening stage, *directives* are employed to challenge the protagonist to defend a standpoint and *commissives* serve to indicate acceptance of the challenge as well as agreement with the premises and discussion rules. In the argumentation stage, *directives* are used to request for argumentation and *assertives* are performed to advance argumentation, while *commissives* will indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of the argumentation. In the concluding stage, standpoints can be upheld or retracted by means of *assertives*; *commissives* are used to indicate acceptance or non-acceptance of a standpoint. In all stages of a critical discussion, *directives* may be employed to request for the performance of *usage declaratives* which provide clarifications and usage declaratives may be performed to provide the clarification desired.¹⁰

In the analytical component of the pragma-dialectical research the model of a critical discussion serves a heuristic and analytic function by enabling a systematic reconstruction of argumentative discourse as it takes place in argumentative reality in terms of the resolution process portrayed in this model.¹¹ The model indicates what kinds of argumentative moves and discussion stages are to be traced when analysing argumentative discourse and how to reconstruct and label the moves

⁹ As a consequence of continued critical questioning, the protagonist's argumentation can become complex and the structure of the argumentation may vary. See van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 73–89) and Snoeck Henkemans (1992).

¹⁰ The category of the usage declaratives is introduced in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) as a specific subcategory of Searle's declaratives.

¹¹ It is important to note that in argumentative practice a great many speech acts in the discourse are performed implicitly or indirectly, so that in the analytic component of the research program it needs to be determined whether they can be reconstructed in terms of the moves pertinent to conducting a critical discussion.

and combinations of moves that are analytically relevant.¹² Among the analytical tools developed in pragma-dialectics to reconstruct argumentative discourse in terms of the model of a critical discussion are the *rules of communication*, based on an integration proposed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst of an amended version of the Searlean felicity conditions for the performance of speech acts in communication and an amended version of the Gricean maxims for the conduct of verbal interaction: Do not perform speech acts which are 1. incomprehensible, 2. insincere, 3. superfluous, 4. pointless or 5. not appropriate in the context in which they occur in a specific speech event (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). In cases where it may be assumed that the *general principles of communication and interaction* are not abandoned, the analyst is to make an effort – just like ordinary listeners or readers do – to reconstruct implicit speech acts in which these rules are violated in such a way that the violation is remedied and the reconstructed speech act agrees with all rules of communication. Following this procedure, ordinary manifestations of argumentative reality such as indirect speech acts and unexpressed premises, which violate the rules of communication when the utterances by which they are conveyed are interpreted literally, can be reconstructed in such a way that they are in agreement with all the rules of communication.

The reconstruction of argumentative discourse implemented in the analytical component of the research program is aimed at achieving an *analytic overview* of the discourse which contains all elements pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits and provides an adequate point of departure for the evaluation (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). In this evaluation the model of a critical discussion serves a critical function by providing a coherent set of standards in the rules for critical discussion.¹³ As an illustration, we cite the *Freedom Rule*, which captures the first standard for resolving a difference of opinion on the merits involving that the difference can be fully expressed: *Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from casting doubt on standpoints*. If it is not clear to the parties that there is a difference of opinion and what this difference involves, a difference of opinion cannot be resolved. In the pragma-dialectical theory, freely advancing and doubting standpoints are therefore considered as basic rights of those entering the confrontation stage of a critical discussion. The Freedom Rule can be violated both by the protagonist and the antagonist. If restric-

¹² The reconstruction is pragmatic since argumentative discourse is viewed as an exchange of speech acts taking place in an actual communicative and interactional context; it is also dialectical since the exchange of speech acts is viewed as aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits by means of a critical discussion. See van Eemeren et al. (1993).

¹³ In non-interactional communicative approaches to argumentation in which argumentation is not put in the broader context of a critical discussion aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits but treated “as a claim and reasons that support it” (Blair 2012), such as *informal logic*, three standards are generally employed in evaluating argumentation: *relevance*, *acceptability*, and *sufficiency*.

tions are imposed on the standpoints that may be advanced or called into question, some standpoints are declared sacrosanct and excluded from the discussion. Next to this type of fallacy, a violation of the Freedom Rule may consist of denying the other party the right to advance or to criticize a certain standpoint, thus eliminating the other party as a serious discussion partner. This type of fallacy can be committed in various ways: by discrediting the opponent's integrity, impartiality, expertise or credibility (*argumentum ad hominem*), by calling on their compassion (*argumentum ad misericordiam*) or by threatening them with sanctions (*argumentum ad baculum*).

Since the mid-1980s, pragma-dialecticians have carried out qualitative and quantitative empirical research as the lack of available concrete methods to explore into the connection between the theory and argumentative reality which can be brought to bear in accounting for reconstructions of argumentative discourse. This research has concentrated primarily on the identification and interpretation of implicit and indirect argumentative moves by ordinary arguers (van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Meuffels 1984, 1989) and on determining the extent to which the standards of reasonableness incorporated in the rules for critical discussion agree with the judgments of ordinary arguers (van Eemeren, Garssen & Meuffels 2009, 2012). The results of this research provide insights in the actual processing of argumentative discourse which put the ideal of a critical discussion in a realistic perspective and provide a point of departure for developing adequate methods for improving argumentative practices.

In the practical component of the pragma-dialectical research, finally, the insights gained in the philosophical, theoretical, analytical and empirical components are put to good use in examining the great variety of argumentative practices and developing methods for improving the productive, analytic and evaluative skills arguers need in order to participate adequately in these practices. In the next section we will explain how the crucial step of taking the “strategic design” of argumentative discourse into account has extended the pragma-dialectical theory in such a way that the various types of argumentative practices in different communicative domains can be fruitfully tackled.

5 A contextualised pragma-dialectical perspective on argumentation

Starting from the model of a critical discussion the pragma-dialectical theorizing has moved gradually, and in various phases, from the analytic level of abstract idealization to the concrete level of the manifold practices of argumentative discourse. A crucial step in this development was taken in the 1990s when van Eemeren set about, together with Peter Houtlosser, to strengthen the connection of pragma-dialectics with argumentative reality by taking the “strategic design” of argu-

mentative discourse into account (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002). Their aim was to extend the available analytic theoretical tools in such a way that a more profound analysis and a more realistic evaluation of argumentative discourse can be given than the pragma-dialectical “standard” theory allowed for.

To account for the strategic design of argumentative discourse, next to the dimension of reasonableness predominant in the standard theory, the dimension of effectiveness needs to be incorporated in the theorizing. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser took as their starting point that in real-life argumentative discourse, in all argumentative moves that are made, the arguers’ objectives of being effective and maintaining reasonableness are pursued simultaneously. In making an argumentative move, arguers are out to achieve the effect of acceptance in the audience they want to reach, but to achieve this effect based on the merits of the move that is made they need to remain within the boundaries of reasonableness defined by the rules for critical discussion. This means that a delicate balance must be kept, because pursuing at the same time these two objectives often creates a certain tension. This is why, according to van Eemeren and Houtlosser, making an argumentative move always involves *strategic manoeuvring*.

Strategic manoeuvring, as explained in by van Eemeren (2010), manifests itself in all argumentative moves in three different aspects: 1. the selection that is made from the *topical potential*, i.e. from the set of alternatives available at that point in the discourse; 2. the adaptation to *audience demand*, i.e. to the frame of reference of the listeners or readers the speaker or listener intends to reach; and 3. the exploitation of *presentational devices*, i.e. stylistic and other means of expression that could serve the purpose. Strategic manoeuvring takes place during the entire process of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits: At every stage the parties are presumed to be out to achieve the dialectical objective of the stage concerned and to achieve at the same time the optimal rhetorical result.

Because strategic manoeuvring takes part in actual communicative practices, in the extended pragma-dialectical theory the institutional conventionalization of these practices is duly taken into account. By observing their specific institutional point and the conventions characterizing the various communicative activity types it becomes possible to identify the institutional preconditions for the use of certain modes of strategic manoeuvring prevailing in a certain activity type. Fallacies are derailed strategic manoeuvres in which a rule for critical discussion has been violated. They can be identified with the help of soundness criteria applicable to the particular activity type in which the manoeuvre is advanced.

With regard to strategic manoeuvring in the legal domain, Eveline Feteris (2009) has concentrated on showing how a judge can manoeuvre strategically in justifying a decision which deviates from the literal meaning of a legal rule by referring to its purpose as it can be inferred from the intention of the legislator. As a case in point, she analyzes and evaluates the judge’s argumentation in the famous Holy Trinity case on the basis of a reconstruction of the burden of proof and the space available for strategic manoeuvring.

With regard to the political domain, van Eemeren and Bart Garssen have examined the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring in argumentative exchanges in the European Parliament. So far, they have concentrated on the impact of a secondary precondition, which they call *the European predicament*, silently imposed upon Members of the European Parliament that they are supposed to serve the European cause and to satisfy at the same time their electorate by protecting the national interests of their home countries (van Eemeren & Garssen 2010, 2011). They show that when a policy is proposed that is disadvantageous to their home country this predicament leads to the occurrence of a regular pattern in the responses of the MEPs.

In *The honourable gentleman should make up his mind*, Dima Mohammed (2009) concentrates on the communicative activity type of Prime Minister's Question Time in the British House of Commons. She examines responses by the Prime Minister to critical questions by oppositional Members of Parliament concerning the government's policies, actions or plans in which the Prime Minister accuses the questioner of an inconsistency. Mohammed also formulates soundness conditions for distinguishing between sound and fallacious accusations of inconsistency. In *Internet political discussion forums as an argumentative activity type*, Marcin Lewinski (2010) focuses on how the contextual conditions of political discussion forums on the Internet affect the way in which the participants react critically. Through empirical analysis he identifies four frequently returning patterns of strategic manoeuvring in critical reactions. The main rhetorical factor underlying these four patterns is the strategic use of the burden of proof. In *Argumentation in political interviews*, Corina Andone (2013) sets out to provide an argumentative explanation for the way in which politicians react in political interviews to the interviewer's accusation that they have taken on a standpoint which is inconsistent with a standpoint they have advanced earlier. In her study, Andone shows that rephrasing one of the standpoints can be a "compensating adjustment" enabling the politician to continue the discussion even if the inconsistency seems undeniable. She distinguishes three patterns which this kind of manoeuvre can have.

In *Getting an issue on the table*, Yvon Tonnard's (2011) aim is to give an account of presentational tactics used by "one-issue" politicians in Dutch parliamentary debate to get the priority issue of their party discussed even when it is not on the agenda, thus showing their electorate that they really care about the issue. In *Pragmatic argumentation in law-making debates*, Constanza Ihnen Jory (2012) develops instruments for the analysis and evaluation of the type of argumentation in which the desirable consequences of a bill are discussed during its "second reading" in British Parliament.

With regard to strategic manoeuvring in the medical domain, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans (2011) has shown how doctors exploit their authority in discussions with the patients while trying to stick to the principle of informed consent. Thomas Goodnight and Roosmaryn Pilgram (2011) have concentrated on the role of *ethos* in

stressing the doctor's expertise. Strategic manoeuvring also takes place in medical advertisements – especially in America – in which certain drugs are promoted. Within the conceptual framework of pragma-dialectics, Lotte van Poppel and Sara Rubinelli (2011) have traced potential flaws in argumentation about the efficacy of medicines advertised directly to consumers. The main problem in these advertisements is that the link between the use of the drug and the improvement of the health condition is made without giving due account of unsuccessful uses of the drug or the possibility that other drugs can help as well. Such strategic manoeuvring often goes against the institutional preconditions for conducting a critical discussion imposed upon this type of advertising by the Food and Drug Administration.

6 A semantic-pragmatic perspective on argumentation

Many of the pragma-dialectical insights into argumentative discourse have been adapted and extended in the last few years in the University of Lugano, where Eddo Rigotti (2009), Andrea Rocci (2009) and some other scholars have been developing a semantic-pragmatic approach to argumentation. To satisfy their practical interest in argumentation they have proposed the *Argumentum Model of Topics*, which supports the design and production of arguments in specific domains such as finance, public institutions, and the media (Rigotti & Greco 2006, 2009). In the Luganese view, “topics is the component of argumentation theory by which all (theoretically possible) relevant arguments in favor and against any standpoint are generated by specifying their inferential structure through a system of *loci*” (Rigotti & Greco 2006).

Employing the pragma-dialectical distinction between procedural and material starting points, Rigotti and Sara Greco Morasso (2010) argue that an argument scheme combines a procedural starting point – the inferential connection (or *maxim*) that is activated – with a material starting point guaranteeing its application to the actual situation. Based on this distinction, they identify the different kinds of premises that are involved in the employment of an argument scheme.

According to Rigotti and Greco Morasso, in the description of the procedural starting points it is important to distinguish between three levels in the relation between a *locus* and the complete argument scheme: a) the level of the *locus* itself (e.g., analogy relation, cause-effect relation); b) the level of inferential connections (e.g., “If the cause is present, the effect must also occur”); and c) the level of the logical form (e.g., *modus ponens* in the case of “What holds for the genus, also holds for the species”).

With regard to the description of the material starting points, Rigotti and Greco Morasso identify “the source of the force of the statement presented as an argu-

ment in relation to the statement presented as a standpoint” (2010: 500). Consider as an illustration the following example they discuss (2010: 499–500):

- A: Should we travel by train or by car?
 B: Remember the traffic jams on New Year’s Eve? And today is our national holiday!

Making use of van Eemeren and Grootendorst’s (1992) analysis of the argument scheme of analogy, Rigotti and Greco Morasso reconstruct B’s argumentation in this example as follows:

1. It is true of this evening (our national holiday) that there will be traffic jams.
2. Because the fact that there were traffic jams was true for New Year’s Eve.
3. And the national holiday is comparable to New Year’s Eve.

According to Rigotti and Greco Morasso, it needs further backing that the national holiday and New Year’s Eve are comparable. This backing could be provided by the premise “that both celebrations are part of ‘a common functional genus’ – that of ‘big celebrations’, in which people allow themselves to take a day off and go on a trip somewhere” (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010: 500). Since the premise constituting the backing of the comparability is an assumption based on the discussants’ shared knowledge of the two celebrations at issue, it can be seen as a typical instance of a material starting point. This type of starting point is, in their view, comparable to the Aristotelian notion of *endoxon*: an opinion that is accepted by the relevant public or by the opinion leaders of the relevant public.

The Luganese scholars have combined semantic research with insights from argumentation theory to develop an approach to cultural *keywords*. In their view, “considerations from argumentation theory can help significantly in the complex task of hypothesizing and testing candidates to the status of keywords in a given culture” (Rigotti & Rocci 2005: 125). This results in the following proposal:

We propose to consider as serious candidates for the status of cultural keywords the words that play the role of terminus medius in an enthymematic argument, functioning at the same time as pointers to an endoxon or constellation of endoxa that are used directly or indirectly to supply an unstated major premise. More precisely, words that typically have this kind of function in public argumentation within a community, are likely candidates to the status of keywords of that community (Rigotti & Rocci 2005: 131).

In an example such as “He’s a traitor. Therefore he deserves to be put to death” (Rigotti & Rocci 2005: 130), the enthymematic argument can be reconstructed as follows:

- Major premise: *Traitors* deserve to be put to death (unstated)
 Minor premise: He is a *traitor*
 Conclusion: He deserves to be put to death.

Because in this example the word “traitor” plays an important role in both the logical and the communicative structure of the argument and is associated with a number of culturally shared beliefs and values, the plausibility of the unstated premise is confirmed.

Another semantic-pragmatic line of research has been carried out by Rocci (2008, 2009) to establish under which conditions modal markers can act as argumentative indicators and to find out what kind of cues they provide for the reconstruction of arguments. This research concentrates on the relationship between argumentation and the semantic-pragmatic functioning of lexical and grammatical modality markers in Italian. The results of this project indicate that epistemic modals – modal expressions by means of which speakers indicate to what extent they are prepared to commit themselves to the truth or acceptability of a proposition – can serve as direct indicators of standpoints, can make explicit the degree of commitment to the standpoint, and enable the anaphoric recovery of premises. Non-epistemic modals – such as modals expressing a deontic or ontological necessity or possibility – can serve as indirect indicators of standpoints and can convey information about the argument scheme that is used by the arguer.

7 Conclusion

Our overview of the state of the art in the discipline generally known as *argumentation theory* has shown that argumentation is examined from various perspectives. The theoretical approaches to argumentation that have been developed differ not only considerably in conceptualisation and refinement, but also in scope. Some approaches, especially those having a background in discourse analysis and conversation analysis or in rhetoric, are primarily descriptive. They tend to focus on the way in which arguers try to convince or persuade their addressees by making use of certain linguistic (and sometimes also non-linguistic) devices. In approaches inspired by logic and philosophy argumentation is as a rule studied for normative purposes. The focus is then on developing soundness criteria for evaluating the quality of argumentative discourse and determining when exactly the argumentative moves that are made are fallacious. The pragma-dialectical theory combines philosophical and logical insights with insights from linguistic communication and interaction. Despite the different angles of approach, there is a common recognition that the study of argumentation has both a descriptive and a normative dimension and that in a fully-fledged argumentation theory both dimensions need to be combined.

In the approaches to argumentation we have discussed the problems involved in the production, analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse are tackled in different ways. The differences depend in the first place on how exactly in the

various approaches the five components of the research program for the study of argumentation that we took as our point of departure in the introduction of our overview are substantiated. This is why the differences between the approaches can be characterized by indicating for each of the components what their distinctive features are.

In substantiating reasonableness in the philosophical component of the research program, the descriptive pragma-linguistic and rhetorical approaches usually opt for an anthropological view of reasonableness. As a rule, starting from such a view leads to an *emic* perspective on argumentative discourse, in which the standards of reasonableness are equated with the *intersubjectively agreed-upon* norms of reasonableness prevailing in a certain community. In normatively oriented dialectical approaches, such as the pragma-dialectical theory, the standards of reasonableness are determined by “external” considerations of *problem-solving validity* in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Then an *etic* perspective on reasonableness in argumentative discourse is chosen, which is more often than not motivated by a critical rationalist philosophy.¹⁴

In substantiating the theoretical component of the research program in the rhetorical approaches opting for an anthropological reasonableness conception the aspects of argumentative discourse are identified that play a vital role in persuading an audience of the acceptability of a standpoint. This does not so much result in a theoretical model of argumentation but in a synthetic overview of the communicative and interactional means that can be persuasive in situated argumentative discourse depending on the type of context in which the discourse takes place. In the pragma-linguistic approaches the factors relevant to an appropriate conduct of argumentative discourse are in principle identified in the same *emic* vein. The approaches to argumentation opting for a critical rationalist conception of reasonableness, such as the pragma-dialectical theory, concentrate in the theoretical component on the development of dialectical procedures for putting the acceptability of standpoints systematically to the test. The pragma-dialecticians give substance to their reasonableness conception in a model of critical discussion that defines all rules and argumentative moves instrumental in the various stages of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Argumentative moves which violate any of the rules for critical discussion, so that they do not comply with the critical-rationalists standards of reasonableness, are marked as fallacious.

In giving substance to the empirical component the theoretical view of argumentation developed in the theoretical component is in all cases taken as the point of departure: this view indicates what is worth investigating empirically. The empirical research that has been conducted in the pragma-linguistic and rhetorical approaches has so far concentrated for the most parts on specific speech events

¹⁴ For a discussion of the distinction between *emic* and *etic* perspectives on language use, see van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson and Jacobs (1993: 50–52).

and is almost exclusively qualitative in nature. These studies have in the first part an explanatory aim: they are directed at explaining the effectiveness (“persuasiveness”) of the argumentative moves that are made. In the pragma-dialectical approach next to qualitative research also experimental quantitative research has been conducted. As a matter of course, in this normative approach the research is not aimed at testing the theoretical model of a critical discussion empirically. All the same, this model serves as a point of orientation. In this research it is, for instance, examined how in argumentative reality the stages and the argumentative moves distinguished in the model are realized. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which the norms of reasonableness of ordinary arguers agree with the critical standards of reasonableness developed in the theory.

In the analytical component of the research programme the emphasis is on developing appropriate methods for reconstructing argumentative discourse in agreement with the theoretical requirements of a certain approach. In accounting for their reconstructions the analysts rely on various sources, ranging from the text of the discourse and its visual accompaniments (if any), the linguistic micro-context, the situational meso-context, the macro-context of the communicative activity type in which the discourse takes place and the intertextual context, to logical and pragmatic inferences the text allows for and relevant general and specific background information. In principle these sources are used in all approaches but the theoretical concepts they are linked with differ in accordance with the different kinds of theoretical views of argumentation prevailing in the various approaches. A pragma-linguistic reconstruction tends to be discourse-oriented and based on linguistic observations, a rhetorical reconstruction connects with the effectiveness of the persuasion process, and a pragma-dialectical or semantic-pragmatic reconstruction combines these two orientations with a concern for reasonableness in the problem-solving sense.

Finally, there are clear differences in the way in which the practical component of the research program is substantiated in the various approaches. In the pragma-dialectical approach and the semantic-pragmatic approach the development of instruments for improving the practices of argumentative discourse leads to proposing methods for systematically improving the arguers’ skills in producing, analysing and evaluating argumentation discourse. A lot of attention is also paid to the different kinds of implementations of theoretical insights into argumentation in the various kinds of communicative activity types that have developed in different communicative domains. In the rhetorical and pragma-linguistic approaches the contributions to the practical component tend to concentrate in the first place on illuminating how exactly argumentative goals are pursued in specific speech events, such as political speeches and public debates.

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14 Discourse Genres

Abstract: Genre marks large-scale repeated patterns of meaning in human symbolic production and interaction. Approaches to genre can be divided into the formalist-thematic, attending to categories and discriminations based on linguistic or textual elements and drawing from cognitive theories; and the pragmatic, attending primarily to use-patterns drawing from social theories of function, action, and communal interaction. This overview draws from disciplines explicitly concerned with natural language, including literature, rhetoric, and several areas of linguistics. A distinction between rational and empirical approaches to genre affects both how genre is conceived and what methods are used for analysis. The rational approach grounds genre in a principle or theory determined by the theorist, yielding a relatively small, closed set of genres; the empirical grounds genre in the experience of those for whom genres are significant, yielding an historically changing, open set of genres. Genre analysis is applied in many discourse disciplines and for a variety of purposes, both descriptive and prescriptive.

Keywords: exigence, formalism, genre awareness, genre system, macrostructure, move analysis, rhetoric, social action, text type, uptake, utterance

1 Introduction

During the latter 20th century, theories of genre proliferated across many disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. This entry provides an account of those developments as well as the directions these theories of genre are taking. It also aims to clarify confusing, and sometimes competing, conceptions of genre. Certainly no account will be comprehensive, but outlining the major schools of thought, the arguments within and across those schools, and the challenges they face will demonstrate many of the critical concerns of genre researchers. This account will also briefly position *discourse genres* with respect to other theories and applications of genre that might be considered “nondiscursive.”

The idea of genre marks large-scale repeated patterns in human symbolic production and interaction, patterns that are taken to be meaningful. Most generally, approaches to genre might be divided into the formalist-thematic and the pragmatic, with formalist-thematic approaches prevailing in the early 20th century through the 1970s, largely because of the dominance of literary and other aesthetic uses of genre theory, and pragmatic approaches gaining prominence since then, reflecting the interests of linguistics, rhetoric, and media studies. Although these are not

mutually exclusive, a formalist-thematic approach attends primarily to categories and discriminations based on various linguistic or textual elements and combinations of elements, and a pragmatic approach attends primarily to those based on use-patterns. Generally speaking, formalist approaches lend themselves more easily to cognitive theories dealing with the perception and recognition of textual and artifactual features, whereas pragmatic approaches lend themselves more easily to social theories dealing with function, action, and interaction within a community of use.

Taking discourse to refer generally to verbal communication, we note that “discourse genres” both implicate a wide range of disciplines and at the same time restrict our selection of genres. Written and spoken communications do not cover the full range of patterned and recurrent symbolic actions that human beings are capable of producing. We need only look to the arts to find genres constituting and being constituted by the media of film, music, painting, sculpture, photography, and so on. Technologies have afforded multiple new platforms through which genres thrive and proliferate, including print, broadcast, and internet. In all these media we are able to characterize different kinds of typified artifacts and interactions, and genre has accordingly been theorized in film studies, media studies, and various fine arts disciplines (for example Altman 1999; Bondebjerg 2001; D’Acci 2001; DiMaggio 1987; Langdon 1999; Lena 2008; Mittell 2004; Rosand 1991). While these disciplines are not primarily concerned with ‘discourse’, they offer a variety of theoretical propositions and provocations that could inform an account of discourse genres.

This overview, then, draws from disciplines explicitly concerned with natural language, including literature, rhetoric, and various schools of linguistics. The two oldest of these, rhetoric and literature, both usually trace their origins to the work of Aristotle, the great classifier. To a surprising extent, the genres that Aristotle discerned in the ancient world have remained influential in subsequent theorizing and instruction, the rhetorical genres of public address being the *forensic*, *deliberative*, and *epideictic* (Aristotle 2007), and the poetic genres being *epic*, *drama*, and *lyric* (Aristotle 1932)¹. Literary genres were the subject of much commentary during the cultural transformations of the European Renaissance (Colie 1973) as well as the neo-Classical period (Dubrow 1982; Fowler 1982: 26–30) and experienced several revivals of interest in the 20th century. Rhetorical genres were understood within an Aristotelian framework until the 1960s and 1970s (Campbell and Jamieson [1978]).

For the last several decades, three schools of thought have dominated genre studies as practiced within the related fields of rhetoric, writing, and applied linguistics; these are, as articulated by Hyon (Hyon 1996) and reinforced by Hyland (Hyland 2002), *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP), *Systemic Functional Linguistics*

¹ See Genette (1992), however, on the error of attributing the trio of literary genres to Aristotle specifically

(SFL, centered in Australia), and North American *Rhetorical Genre Studies* (RGS). While these three research traditions have differing disciplinary, methodological, pedagogical, and goal orientations, they are in conversation with one another; other linguistic disciplines that have been less central to these conversations are sociolinguistics, text linguistics, and critical discourse analysis. Other schools of thought emerging from European educational research have been influential, particularly in Brazil; these draw on Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and Bronckart's socio-discursive interactionism (Araújo 2010). The Brazilian tradition offers a useful synthesis of rhetorical and linguistic traditions, according to Bawarshi & Reiff (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010: 76–77).

One further distinction is worth making here, as it will appear in several forms in the discussion to follow and affects both how genre is conceived and what methods are used for analysis. We may call these the *rational* and the *empirical* approaches to genre, which Todorov calls the *theoretical* and the *historical* approaches, the first resulting from deduction or inference from some principle and the second from observation of natural socio-discursive practices, or in Todorov's focus, "literary reality" (Todorov 1975: 13). The rational or theoretical approach grounds genre in a principle or theory determined by the theorist or critic, working top-down and usually yielding a relatively small, closed set of genres; among these we may include Aristotle and some work in literary and rhetorical criticism that still rests on Aristotelian categories, as well as Frye (Frye 1971) and some work in historical and text linguistics (as discussed in Diller 2001: 10–14). The empirical or theoretical approach grounds genre in the experience of those for whom genres are significant, working bottom-up and yielding an historically changing, open set of genres; among these we may include RGS, most applied linguistics, and some literary theory.

2 Social aspects

Social approaches to genre have predominated in recent decades, across most fields. Two independent accounts have served as epicenters for the social approach, Bakhtin's "Speech Genres" (Bakhtin 1986)² and Miller's "Genre as Social Action" (Miller 1984). Both have been widely taken up in applied linguistics, communication, composition and writing studies, education, library sciences, linguistic anthropology, literary studies, new media studies, rhetoric, technical and business communication, and other fields.

Bakhtin defines genres as the "relatively stable types of [...] utterances" that occur in each sphere of language use (Bakhtin 1986: 60) and "enter our experi-

² Bakhtin's work was originally published in Russian in 1979 but was written in 1952–53, according to the editors of the English-language edition cited here. Some of the ideas were originally formulated with Vološinov in the 1920s (Vološinov 1986).

ence” in conjunction with the forms of language (Bakhtin 1986: 78) as “mandatory” but “flexible and plastic” (Bakhtin 1986: 80). The social dimensions of genre are adumbrated in his general claims about the “link between language and life” (63) and his emphasis on the “inherent responsiveness” of “live utterance,” as a “link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances” (68, 69); in other words, each utterance is “dialogic” (92) and characterized by “addressivity” (95). The social process that Bakhtin calls “assimilation” (89) connects the speech experience of an individual with the utterances of others: “these words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, re-work, and re-accentuate” (89). The social dimension is also suggested in Bakhtin’s brief allusion to complex or secondary genres as “ideological” (62), in that they are historically formed (and informed) bearers of values, ideas, and social relations.

The theme of ideology has been taken up in multiple fields of genre study. In literary studies, Todorov notes that “the existence of certain genres in a society and their absence in another reveal a central ideology, and enable us to establish it with considerable certainty” (Todorov 1976: 164). Beebee takes this theme farther: “what makes genre ideological is our practice of speaking of it as a ‘thing’ rather than as the expression of a relationship between user and a text, a practice similar to that identified by Marx as ‘commodity fetishism’” (Beebee 1994: 18). Defining genre as “use-value,” Beebee identifies his approach as “pragmatic,” connecting use-value with a view of meaning as use (Beebee 1994: 274, 14). In linguistics, ideology has been central to Critical Discourse Analysis, which applies a variety of linguistic methods to elucidating the role of discourse in constructing and reproducing hegemonic relations; in this effort, genre is one construct among many that can establish “the ways in which discourse is internalised in power and power is internalised in discourse” (Fairclough 2010: 6). Rhetorical Genre Studies has also taken up the theme of ideology, following a challenge in 1994 to incorporate the analysis of power relations and communication ethics (Luke 1994; see also Luke 1996); this agenda is represented in a 2002 collection of essays intended to supplement genre description with critique of values, hierarchies, and identity formation (Coe 2002).

Miller (1984) argues for a pragmatic approach to genre, against the formal approaches that then prevailed in rhetorical studies, and offers an account based in rhetorical practice and organized around recurrent actions grounded in recurrent typified situations, understood through Schutz’s sociological phenomenology of types (Schutz and Luckmann 1973), Bitzer’s account of situation (Bitzer 1968), and Burke’s discussions of motive (Burke 1969). Types, although they may have a conceptual (and thus cognitive) basis, are also social in both origin and function: they are sedimented in language, socially validated and transmitted, subject to a process of historical evolution based on the pressures of use, and they serve to co-orient social participants and to co-construct social meanings. Recurrence is thus “an intersubjective phenomenon, a social occurrence” (Miller 1984: 156). Further,

a rhetorical conception of situation has *exigence* at its center (Bitzer 1968), and Miller characterizes recurrent exigence as “a form of social knowledge – a mutual construing of objects, events, interests, and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objectified social need” (Miller 1984: 157).

Social approaches to genre also draw upon social approaches to language. Miller’s work derives in part from speech-act theory, with the rhetorical action of genre understood on the model of the *illocutionary act* in Austin (1975), a model focused on the action orientation or pragmatic force of language in use. In this respect, it parallels Bakhtin’s account, insofar as the *utterance*, which he sees as the “real unit of speech communication” (Bakhtin 1986: 71), rather than the sentence or the proposition, can be identified with the later notion of the *speech act*; similarly Todorov (who does not draw from Bakhtin significantly until his later work) sees literary genres as transformed and institutionalized speech acts (Todorov 1976: 164–165). An important extension of Austin’s relevance to genre is Freadman’s re-examination of his concept of *uptake* (Austin 1975: 117). Uptake embeds social directionality within the illocutionary act; in Austin this seems to require no more than comprehension; for Freadman, uptake is rhetorical, and genre involves not a single text but at least a pair: “the text is contrived to secure a certain class of uptakes,” and the uptake text “confirms its generic status by conforming itself to this contrivance,” or not (Freadman 2002: 40). Operating through culture, memory, and other factors, “uptake selects, defines, or represents its object,” the other text or genred action (Freadman 2002: 48).

Another important influence has been social semiotics, deriving from the work of Halliday, which connects semantic and lexico-grammatical patterns to repeated situation types as semiotic structures: “the semiotic components of the situation (field, tenor, and mode) are systematically related to the functional components of the semantics (ideational, interpersonal, and textual),” respectively, with field representing the activity in which the text functions, tenor representing the status and role relationships involved, and mode representing the symbolic and rhetorical systems in use (Halliday 1978: 122–123). Halliday’s work was the starting point for Kress, for whom genre is the semiotic realization of “social organization, practices, and interactions” (Kress 2010) that both “reflects and constructs certain relations of power and authority” (Kress 1993: 22). Because it allows for attention to sign-systems beyond the linguistic, such as the visual, Kress has carried the semiotic approach to genre from his early work in school literacy into the multimodality of the new media age, attending to the ways that a variety of texts combine visual and discursive modes, texts such as instructional materials, “rules and regulations” drawn up by volunteer organizations, passport stamps, product information cards, and websites; and finding that generic signals regarding social relationships and practices can be conveyed in visual codes and in physical qualities of a medium as well as in linguistic features such as prepositional usage (Kress 2003; Kress 2010).

Halliday’s work is also the source of the extensive genre research in Systemic Functional Linguistics (based in Australia and sometimes known as the “Sydney

School”), which is committed to articulating the connections between language use and social context (Cope et al. 1993: 231). Halliday never emphasized genre, coming to identify field, tenor, and mode with “register”, a range of “meaning potential” associated with the semiotic structure of a situation type (Halliday 1978: 122–123), but his successors, most prominently Martin, added genre as an additional metafunctional level of analysis that coordinates the resources of register and points holistically to the social purposes of texts (Martin 2009: 12). Defining genre as “recurrent configuration of meanings” (Martin 2009: 13) manifested as “a staged goal-oriented social process” (Martin 2009: 10), Martin and colleagues argue that the semantic and lexico-grammatical resources of language are combined into recognizable patterns, such as exposition, observation, anecdote, and report, and whole-discourse combinations (“staging”) of such patterns that they call “macro-genres”. The research in SFL has been driven in part by a pedagogical agenda, an effort to make linguistics relevant to writing that “counts” (Martin 1993: 119) and to enable teachers to prepare disadvantaged students for full representation and participation in their societies, as a matter of “social justice” (Martin 2009: 11; Martin and Rose 2008: 8, 20).

As socially constituted entities, genres exist not in isolation but within a cultural system: they belong to discourse communities (Swales 1990: 9); they are, as Miller puts it, cultural artifacts, or “representation[s] of reasoning and purposes characteristic of [a] culture” (Miller 1984: 164–165). And they are connected in systems or clusters that help constitute cultures and subcultures, as these same theorists have noted. Swales offers a useful overview of the various ways these connections have been described, as *hierarchies*, *chains*, *sets*, and *networks* (Swales 2004: 12–25); Spinuzzi offers the additional notion of *genre ecologies* as assemblages of genres that mediate practical work (Spinuzzi 2004). In the area of Renaissance literature, Colie uses the idea of a *genre system* to characterize the background of accepted genres and beliefs about their value and relationships: “A genre-system offers a set of interpretations, of ‘frames’ or ‘fixes’ on the world” (1973: 8). A related concept is “meta-genre”, which Giltrow introduced to describe “atmospheres of wordings and activities, demonstrated precedents or sequestered expectations” that surround a genre and indicate how readers and writers should appropriately take it up (Giltrow, 2002: 195).

Another line of work that takes a distinctly social approach to genre draws from Activity Theory, or Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Based in Vygotsky’s work on child psychology (Vygotsky 1975), activity theory was further developed by Leont’ev and Luria in Soviet-era Russia, and later by Finnish educational researcher Engeström. This program rejected biological accounts of human action, understanding psychological states as developed in response to social and linguistic interaction and aiming at a sociocognitive psychology. Though many who took it up in the fields of education, human-computer interaction, and neuroscience focused on the cognitive aspects, genre researchers in writing studies have focused

on the social dimensions. They have drawn on work by Cole and Engeström (Cole and Engeström 1993; Engeström 2001, 2009), which developed the construct of the activity system as the basic unit of analysis for behavior, both individual and collective; an activity system is “any ongoing, object-directed, historically conditioned, dialectically structured, tool-mediated human interaction”, such as a family, a religious organization, a political movement, an academic discipline (Russell 1997: 510). Russell connected activity systems with genre systems to position genres as mediational means operating within activity systems. Engeström likewise sees “genre and activity [...] as complementary concepts” (Engeström 2009: 308), though he cautions against the “strong anchoring of genre to writing and written texts” because “[a]ctivities are mediated by multiple modalities from bodily movements and gestures to pictures, sounds, tools, and all kinds of signs” (Engeström 2009: 9). This limitation pertains to the specific community of genre researchers in writing studies that have taken up activity theory, but the point about moving beyond written texts is useful more generally.

The effort to study oral discourse genres was taken up in folklore studies before it was of interest in linguistics, in part because of linguists’ preference for studying *langue* over *parole*. Bauman traces the study of speech genres to the folkloric collections of the Grimm brothers and Propp’s structural classifications of folktales, and it was the English translation of Propp’s work in 1958 (Propp 1958) that generated interest in the analysis of oral genres in linguistics and anthropology (Bauman 2006: 745). Hymes’s advocacy of “the ethnography of speaking” made genre relevant to anthropology. He defines genres as “verbal forms organized in terms of one or more defining principles of recurrence and/or development” (Hymes 1989: 442), with a beginning and an end and a pattern in between; these “ways of speaking” represent cultural patterns of language in use (Hymes 1989: 445–446). They include minimal genres such as the riddle, proverb, and prayer, as well as complex genres, such as longer tales and rituals. Some of the issues that Bauman identifies in current work on oral discourse genres include how bounded wholes are identified, how incomplete events are perceived, how participant co-production proceeds, whether all linguistic production is generically organized, how metapragmatic genre awareness operates, and how generic emergence, hybridity, and intertextuality should be informed by the social history of genres (Bauman 2006: 752–754, 757).

3 Cognitive aspects

Cognitive approaches to genre might be described as an emerging area of interest for genre studies. Although cognitive accounts of writing activity were developed in the 1980s by Flower and Hayes (Flower and Hayes 1981), Berkenkotter and Huckin were first rhetoricians to identify the need for attention to cognition in genre

studies with their “sociocognitive” perspective, drawing on the psychological theory of “situated cognition” and positing genre knowledge as based in practical engagement in the “activities of daily and professional life” (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1993: 478, 486–487). Grounded in Vygotskian activity theory, this approach has not led to much subsequent work on the cognitive side, as cognitive approaches fell out of favor in North American writing studies in the 1980s. But the 20th-century development of cognitive psychology as a counter-current to behaviorism offers rich resources relevant to pattern recognition and conceptual categories that could apply in a cognitive approach to genre. The most important include Gestalt theory, based in work on perception; schema theory, originally articulated in Bartlett’s work on memory in the 1930s and taken up in the 1970s by Rumelhart and others; and prototype theory, as developed in Rosch’s studies of category formation. A cognitive account of genre offered in 1981 by psychologists found some evidence of different reading strategies for the “story” and “essay” genres, while admitting that the characterization of these genres was more intuitive than principled, and little subsequent work pursued this research agenda in genre studies (Olson 1981). Related work has been done in both cognitive and computational linguistics, with the assumption in the former that conceptual (or mental) categories are correlated with linguistic categories and in the latter that these correlations can be used to construct computational models that are informative about either the mind or the nature of language (Lakoff 1987: 91–117).

Understanding cognitive aspects of genre will likely require more formalist approaches than those described in the previous section. Recognition and interpretation of large-scale communicative patterns from a cognitive point of view invite attention to semantic and syntactic dimensions of discourse and meaning, rather than the pragmatic dimension. The effort in the 1970s to extend the scope of linguistic analysis beyond the sentence, a movement known as text linguistics, included van Dijk’s concept of the “macrostructure,” to provide an explicitly cognitive explanation of how language users rely on large-scale mental representations to plan and execute discourse in complex social interaction and to comprehend and remember complex information: they “need to assign global structures to the complex semantic input: They look for or construct themes, topics, gist, point, and the schemata organizing these global aspects of content” (van Dijk 1980: 200–202). Van Dijk invokes related macrostructural concepts from cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence work, such as frames, schemes, scripts, and scenarios (202). Text linguistics, according to Diller, generally aimed to develop principled means of text classification that would provide “a place for each and every text, including literary texts” (Diller 2001: 11). More recent work in applied linguistics has offered a model of “cognitive genres” to complement the social approach; based in schema theory and prototype theory, cognitive genres relate human intention through rhetorical aims to the structure of ideas and discourse patterns in texts (Bruce 2008: 42).

In a challenge to the “stagnation” of genre theorization in literary studies, Frow offers as potential sources of renewal both the rhetorical approach discussed above and the new field of cognitive poetics, an offshoot of cognitive science (Frow 2007: 1629). In this perspective, genres “act as schematic representations of the world that project genre-specific worlds” (1631), though there has been “little direct theorization of genre in cognitive poetics” (1632). As a cognitive organization of time, space, causality, motivation, and agents, a generic world is much like what Bakhtin called the *chronotope*, or the time-space relations and accompanying social beliefs about agency, society, and value that are embedded in any genre (Bakhtin 1981, 84 ff.). Keunen has pointed out the cognitive dimensions of the Bakhtinian *chronotope*, finding “a remarkable parallel” between the *chronotope* and Bartlett’s memory schemata, though there is no evidence that Bakhtin read Bartlett’s work (Keunen 2000: 3). One of the major advocates of cognitive poetics, Mark Turner, has suggested that a cognitive analysis of literary genres is a “necessary and obvious” project (Turner 1991: 150), but offers only a sketch of how it might proceed.

Some pedagogical research in writing studies and applied linguistics has invoked cognitive models because the central questions are about learning. Bazerman, for example, has argued for renewed attention to cognitive approaches to genre in writing studies. In contrast to the psychological approaches described above, which attempt to provide a cognitive basis for generic pattern recognitions and functioning, he suggests that genres can be “tools of cognition”; that is, “genres identify a problem space for the developing writer to work in as well as provide the form of the solution the writer seeks and particular tools useful in the solution” (Bazerman 2009: 283, 291). Genres, in other words, can serve to identify relevant *zones of proximal development*, in Vygotsky’s terms, and thus provide teaching situations that engage the learner productively (Bazerman 2009: 290).

Further exploration of the cognitive dimensions of genre will likely require attention to oral and vernacular genres alongside the studies of written and professional discourse emphasized under most social approaches. It remains to be seen what the ongoing revolutions in cognitive sciences – and the related cognitive poetics, cognitive rhetorics, and cognitive linguistics – can contribute to understanding the cognitive aspects of genre.

4 Methodology

As we have discussed multiple schools of thought and disciplinary locations for genre studies, detailed coverage of the multiple analytical methods and critical approaches they employ will be impossible. Rather, we will outline some central methodological issues that cut across many fields and indicate useful sources for more detail. One major issue derives from the distinction noted in our introduction between rational and empirical definitions of genre. The former leads to a deduct-

ive and the latter to an inductive methodology. Does one begin with a set of principles or theorized taxonomy and then evaluate instances? Or does one begin by identifying the salient categories and discriminations made by members of the discourse community in which the genre has its place and function? In other words, are genres made by theorists or users? A second, related issue is where one locates genre: is it a corpus – a collection of texts or events? is it the set of features that they have in common, the worlds that they project? is it the recognitions and expectations by which members of a discourse community mutually identify a genre? Third, does one identify a genre by examining formal or textual features (an internalist approach) or by locating or analyzing instances with respect to social practices and user evaluations (an externalist or contextual approach)? Finally, one can engage in genre-related research for many reasons, and one's research questions, which often depend on one's disciplinary positioning, will help determine method. As we will discuss purposes and functions of research below in the Applications section, we focus here on the first three issues identified above.

Diller provides a helpful discussion of inductive and deductive approaches in text linguistics (Diller 2001: 11). The inductive approach to text categorization is represented by Biber, who distinguishes “genre” from “text type”: genres are “folk typologies”, that is, “text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language” and defined primarily “on the basis of external format”, whereas text types are analytical categories developed to represent “sets of [internal] syntactic and lexical features that cooccur [sic] frequently in texts” (Biber 1989: 5–6). In contrast, Diller exemplifies the deductive approach with Longacre's classification scheme based on the *a priori* features of agent orientation and chronology. These two parameters serve as the basis for four “notional categories” or “deep” text types: narrative, procedural, behavioral, and expository discourse, categories that Longacre views as more stable and universal than genres (Longacre 1996: 8–9). Other examples of deductive approaches would include Aristotle's focus on the role of the audience in distinguishing three rhetorical genres (Aristotle 2007: 1.3.1) and Frye's “radical of presentation” that defines four poetic genres (Frye 1971: 246–247). The genre, as a category, then, belongs to the research community rather than to the community of use in which the genre functions (unless or until the theoretical categories are taken up by the community, as in Aristotle's case, through an extensive pedagogical tradition).

Even in taking an inductive approach, there is room for methodological variation. One can begin with a corpus and seek patterns, either those identified by the community of use (an emic or insider approach) or those discerned through content analysis, feature matching of various sorts (syntactic features, figures of speech, organizational patterns), media use, contextual location, etc. (an etic or outsider approach). One can, alternatively, begin with a single text that is a candidate for identification with a genre and explore what configuration of qualities give it its generic identity. The former approach is typical of the social and linguistic

sciences and the latter of humanistic criticism. For example, rhetorical critics Campbell and Jamieson, who see genres as “groups of discourses that share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics”, advocate the close examination of individual texts of interest in order to reveal “both the conventions and affinities that a work shares with others [...] and] the unique elements in the rhetorical act, the particular means by which [it] is individuated” (Campbell and Jamieson 1978: 20, 14); their approach is both internalist in its attention to theme and style and externalist in its attention to situational-historical context. Such criticism, they maintain, identifies “undercurrents of history” and “not only what has recurred but [...] what may recur” (Campbell and Jamieson 1978: 26, 24) and thus is not fully empirical. For more on rhetorical criticism as a method, Campbell offers a useful introduction (Campbell 2010), and Frow offers a comprehensive discussion of humanistic approaches to genre criticism (Frow 2014).

The subtitle of Martin’s recent introduction to SFL, *Genre Relations: Mapping Culture*, suggests an aim similar to that of Campbell and Jamieson and many in RGS. SFL also typically examines small numbers of texts but brings with it an extensive theoretical apparatus of linguistic and textual features, including meta-functions, structures, and discourse semantics, producing a more deductive, primarily internalist approach to analysis. Another primarily internalist approach that many applied linguists have adopted is Swales’s “move analysis”, used originally to characterize a small corpus of introductions to academic research articles. He defines a move as “a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse”; as a “functional, not a formal, unit”, a move can be a clause, a sentence cluster, or a paragraph (Swales 2004: 228–229). Move analysis has been elaborated, combined with more quantitative methods, and applied to larger corpora by Biber and colleagues (2007). Another common internalist approach, exemplified by Paltridge, also working in the applied linguistics tradition, points to formalisms of discourse structure somewhat larger than moves, or the “internal patternings of rhetorical organization”, such as anecdote, exposition, and report (Paltridge 1996: 239). In such classifications, often based in linguistics and cognitive traditions, we find a stable, systematic taxonomy with a restricted number of categories.

Most literary studies use critical-interpretive approaches similar to that of Campbell and Jamieson in that they usually focus on very small numbers of texts. Yet there is disagreement about the relative roles of the critic and the community of use in identifying genre. For example, Rosmarin argues that genre is “most usefully a tool of critical explanation, as our most powerful and reasoned way of justifying the value we would place on a literary text” (Rosmarin 1985: 48–49). Genres, then, belong to the academic community and serve critical purposes. A contrasting view is that of Beebee, who takes the position that “genre is only secondarily an academic enterprise and a matter for literary scholarship. Primarily, genre is the precondition for the creation and reading of texts”, within a community of use

(Beebee 1994: 250). There is still a resistant impulse in literary studies, dating to the Romantic reaction against Neoclassical prescriptivism: Hauptmeier, for example, problematizes the possibility of genre as an empirical phenomenon and settles for the notion of “genre concepts” as cognitive schemata that regulate and organize “media actions” (Hauptmeier 1987: 426); and Derrida, demonstrating that the “law of genre” is paradoxical, asks critics to discover the ways a text “participates” in a genre through gesture, allusion, citation, rather than to allot it membership in a category (Derrida 1980: 59). Hauptmeier’s resistance, nevertheless, locates genre in the community of use and Derrida’s locates it in the critic. Duff’s (2000) critical collection is a useful introduction to the main strands of literary genre theory.

Much of the work in RGS has been inductive and externalist, often using qualitative empirical methods, such as naturalistic field observations of writers and recipients, interviews within the community of use, reception data (reviews and commentary), as well as various strategies of text analysis drawn from rhetorical criticism and linguistics. For example, Schryer combines rhetorically grounded textual analysis, observational data, and interview data to examine rhetorical practices within an insurance corporation that produce ineffective correspondence with claimants (Schryer 2000); in other work, unusual in RGS for its focus on an oral genre, she examines the role of the medical case presentation in the professionalization of medical students (Schryer, Lingard and Spafford 2005). A combination of internalist and externalist strategies provides Schryer with critical insight into the particular communities within which these genres are invoked, recur, and change and the relationship between community practices and textual features.

Two nearly simultaneous studies of the weblog genre provide a useful comparison of preferred methods in different fields. The linguist Susan Herring and co-authors use quantitative content analysis to produce a description of salient features and to compare these empirical features of blogs with popular claims about them and position them within an internet ecology of genres (Herring et al. 2005). They assume “that a genre is meaningfully defined by central tendencies discoverable through empirical analysis; that is, that a genre is a generalization about what a majority of its practitioners do” (2005: 163). Rhetoricians Miller and Shepherd characterize the cultural context within which blogs became popular; analyze evaluations by bloggers and other sources to describe the desired contents, form, and pragmatic functions of blogs; and extrapolate the social exigence that produces shared recognitions motivating recurrent forms (Miller and Shepherd 2004). They assume that a genre is defined by the expectations and motivations of its users, qualities that are not immediately available for empirical inspection.

5 Applications

Genre analysis is applied in many discourse disciplines, as indicated above, and for a variety of purposes, both descriptive and prescriptive. Rhetorical and literary

scholars, interested in cultural and historical analysis, study genres to understand the reproduction of traditions and their relationships and embedded values and to evaluate the power and influence of particular texts. Linguists aim to understand the processes of learning, producing, and interpreting language patterns and their situational appropriateness. Anthropologists use genre analysis to understand situated language use as a constituent of culture. This kind of cultural-historical-discursive analysis is primarily descriptive, though rhetorical and literary criticism often include an evaluative edge. Other fields aim at more practical uses, which often turn prescriptive: information and library science use genre analysis to improve classification and searching; organization and management specialists aim at designing efficient and effective business operations; and applied linguists, rhetoricians, and writing specialists seek to improve teaching and learning of new discursive roles and responsibilities at all levels of education.

Research taking a social approach to genre, especially within rhetoric and applied linguistics, has focused on a somewhat restricted range of genres, those located in professional and institutional worlds, including classrooms of primary, secondary, and higher education, in part because of the ultimately pedagogical applications that motivate much of the research. Such studies have concerned managerial genres such as the memo (Yates 1989), the functions of email within a corporation (Orlikowski and Yates 1994), and electronic collaboration technology (Yates and Orlikowski 2002). Bazerman's early work was on scientific genres (Bazerman 1988), and Swales and other applied linguists have done extensive work on various research genres (Swales 1990, 2004). Other professional areas that have been of interest include banking (Smart 2007), social work (Paré 1993), engineering (Winsor 1999), commerce (Bhatia 2004), and healthcare (Schryer, Lingard and Spafford 2005; Schryer et al. 2012). The pedagogical applications of this work are in advanced undergraduate and graduate education.

For instruction of first-year college and younger students, genres of interest have often been conceived as formal structures less tied to specific social contexts, forms such as summaries, reports, narratives, and descriptions that are posited to be of future use to students both in academic and workplace situations (Tardy and Swales 2008: 566–567). Many of the texts analyzed in the SFL tradition are those produced by children or those intended for use by children in school, and one of the major aims has been to enculturate marginalized students into mainstream culture. A related approach, originating and largely situated in the United Kingdom, focuses on academic literacies. Genre training in this tradition aims to provide students, especially non-traditional students, with linguistic capital to perform in academic essayist traditions, as well as to understand the power dynamics genres carry (Lillis 2001). The Brazilian school of genre theory, spurred by a national curriculum reform, has developed a “didactic sequence” to organize classroom activities, with attention to situation, objectives, content, and organization, incorporating practice and feedback on the basis of authentic models (Cristovão in

press; see also Bazerman, Bonini, and Figueiredo 2009). In the United States, writing studies has been a major site where genre research is translated into the classroom. A central instructional issue has been whether explicit instruction in genre can be effective if genres are meaningful only within their naturalistic socio-cultural settings and are best acquired through genuine apprenticeship (Freedman 1993), and different pedagogies use implicit or explicit instructional strategies (Devitt 2009: 342). Since cultural immersion is what produced the conditions that many find inadequate, most pedagogies opt for at least some explicit teaching, and Devitt's goal is to teach *genre awareness*, or the "critical consciousness of genre" (Devitt 2009: 347). Additional instructional approaches in the U.S. are described in Herrington and Moran's collection on genre across the curriculum (Herrington and Moran 2005).

The pedagogical interests of much applied genre work have overlooked large arenas of discursive activity that lack curricular mandates: the discourse of everyday social life and entertainment commodities, as well as much new media and user-generated, or vernacular discursive activity; in addition, there has been little cross-fertilization between the study of written and oral genres and little attention to applications of literary and visual genres to new media. Two recent collections bring linguistic and rhetorical approaches to new media genres (Campagna et al. 2012; Giltrow and Stein 2009), including attention to the question of how genres and media technologies are related. There is also interest in genre within the field of game studies (Apperley 2006). Because genre is a productive construct in multiple disciplines and because new media offer new opportunities for patterned, recurrent interaction in multimodal environments, continued research will benefit from increased interdisciplinary cooperation.

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Terry Joyce

15 Writing systems and scripts

Abstract: Rather paradoxically, given the immense significance of writing for our modern societies, as Powell (2009) astutely declares, writing is generally “poorly understood” and, lamentably, enduring misconceptions about writing systems only obfuscate. Taking the development of a coherent and consistent typology of writing systems to be an essential task for researching and comprehending writing systems and writing, this chapter focuses primarily on some of the persistent misconceptions and problematic inconsistencies concerning writing systems. More specifically, after considering the relationship between language and writing, much of Section 2 discusses some of the various typological categories and terminology proposed within the research literature. Section 3 briefly introduces a selective handful of script examples – Chinese characters, the Japanese writing system, Korean han-gŭl, and SignWriting – and the chapter ends with a few concluding remarks on the wider implications of improving our understandings of writing systems and writing.

Keywords: writing systems, scripts, typology, writing, terminology

It is not hard to see that writing is the single most important technology in human life, yet it is not easy to study or to think about.
Barry Powell (2009: 1)

1 Introduction

Several books on writing systems (Coulmas 1989, 2003, 2013; Gnanadesikan 2009; Robinson 1995, 2009; Rogers 2005; Sproat 2010) start with some observations about writing being the most consequential invention or technology of humans. Such observations often seek to illustrate the sheer range of activities and achievements enabled by writing – from remote communication (texting, email, letters), entertainment (comics, novels, literature), economic and social organization (invoices, accounting, laws), to the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge (research articles, textbooks, encyclopedias, Wikipedia) – to underscore how writing is an indispensable aspect of our modern societies. Although Powell’s (2009) statement also makes this basic point, far more uniquely, it also points to the rather strange, yet regrettably very real, paradox that, notwithstanding its undeniable significance, writing is “a difficult topic, little studied, poorly understood” (as the title of

his introduction chapter puts it). After a considerable period of general neglect, growing interest in writing and writing systems over the last couple of decades or so is gradually redressing the “little studied” situation. However, ameliorating the tragedy of “poorly understood” is obviously another matter completely. A more extensive literature alone will not necessarily foster greater understanding, unless it is prepared to continually challenge and reexamine our assumptions and to confront and dispel the deeply-engrained confusions that abound about writing, the relationships to speech and language, and how writing systems function.¹ Accordingly, Section 2 of this chapter focuses primarily on some terminology issues particularly germane to the typology of writing systems as an essential tool for understanding writing systems and writing. By their very nature as classification frameworks, typologies embody certain assumptions about the phenomenon under analysis, and, in turn, the categorical contrasts proposed and labeled simultaneously allow for the analysis of those inherent assumptions. Contrastive in both its length and focus, the shorter Section 3 provides brief outlines for a small sample of script examples. The chapter concludes with a few general comments about some wider implications. However, as already signaled, given that much of the discussion turns on terminology confusions, it is only fitting to start by noting a basic distinction between *writing system* and *script*, which, as Weingarten (2011) points out, are often confused.² According to a recent definition provided by Coulmas (2013: 17), *writing system* primarily “refers to an abstract type of graphic system” that functions at a particular linguistic level.³ This definition is entirely consistent with the focus in Section 2 on the typology of writing systems. In contrast, *script* refers to a specific realization of a writing system associated with a particular language, which is consistent with the focus of Section 3.

2 Typology of writing systems

It is beneficial at the outset to briefly state the gist of the matter. Writing systems represent language and, more specifically, they function essentially at one of three

¹ For example, Powell (2009: 1) singles out three “popular confusions” addressed within his book; namely, 1. “the illusion that the *purpose*, *origin*, and *function* of writing is to represent speech” (original italics), 2. “the common supposition that writing comes from pictures”, and 3. “the misapprehension that writing necessarily evolves toward the goal of finer phonetic representation”.

² Weingarten (2011) conceives of writing systems as pairings between a particular language and a particular script, such as Amharic-Latin versus Amharic-Ethiopic, referring, respectively, to the Amharic language written in the Latin script and the Amharic language written in the Ethiopic script. Although the interpretation of writing system differs somewhat from the one adopted here, the basic proposal of identifying the language-script pairing has merit and is, therefore, adopted in Section 3.

³ Coulmas (2013: 17–18) also acknowledges a secondary sense in referring to “the specific rules according to which the units of the system are interpreted in a given language”. That is essentially

linguistic levels; either at the levels of *morphemes* (smallest linguistic units of meaning), *syllables* (phonological units consisting of either a vowel alone or a combination of a vowel and consonant(s)), or *phonemes* (smallest contrastive phonological units). Thus, the primary goal of the typology of writing systems should be to clearly communicate these core observations. Regrettably, however, the relatively small, but expanding, collection of typologies proposed so far have generally failed to adequately do that (for selective reviews, see Coulmas (1996) and Joyce and Borgwaldt (2011)). While a number of these typology proposals are introduced whenever particularly relevant, this section seeks primarily to highlight the key issues that have shaped them and motivated their category labels. This focus is greatly inspired by Powell's (2009: xv) assertion that writing "can be defined and understood, but only with the help of a careful organization of categories and terms".⁴ It should, therefore, be noted that rather than attempting to outline a complete typology proposal,⁵ the spirit here is more to illuminate some of the entrenched misconceptions and problematic inconsistencies concerning writing systems with a view to advancing and further refining typology research, given that there is, arguably, much justification to Weingarten's (2011: 12) recent pronouncement that the "typology of writing systems is still in its beginnings".

2.1 Defining language and writing

As typologies of writing systems draw on basic assumptions about language and about the relationship between speech and writing as much as reflecting interpretations concerning the creation and historical development of writing systems (Henderson 1982; Joyce 2011), our discussions start with the misconceptions surrounding the definitions of language and of writing.

Language refers to both systems of contrastive symbols and the innate human faculty to manipulate the symbol systems for communicative and cognitive pur-

the sense underlining my customary usage of the term of *Japanese writing system* (i.e. Joyce 2002; 2011; Joyce, Hodošček and Nishina 2012; Joyce, Masuda and Ogawa 2014) to refer to the unique mixture of scripts (kanji, kana, alphabet) that together constitutes a single orthographic system.

⁴ Indicative of the huge obstacles to be overcome, however, Powell (2009: xv) also remarks that he knows "of no other humanistic topic more distorted through the careless use of categories and terms, so that things "everyone knows" are illusions". A little later on, he also suggests that "the misuse of three words more than any others have harmed the study of the history of writing: "pictogram," "ideogram" (or ideograph), and "alphabet"" (p. 3), but, arguably, the list could be much longer. In briefly commenting on the synonyms of pictograph and ideograph, respectively, from the perspective of Japanese kanji, Joyce (2011) stresses that, although the terms have some merit in the very narrow senses of referring to two principles of kanji creation, clearly neither principle can underpin a full writing system.

⁵ For instance, while largely excluded in the interests of brevity, the comprehensive typology of writing systems would undoubtedly also benefit from paying more attention to the issues of tone orthographies (Roberts 2011).

poses. However, largely influenced by Bloomfield (1933) and his much-cited comments about writing being merely a means of transcribing speech, many scholars still ascribe to the *language is speech* position (Joyce 2011) that simply confuses *language* with *speech* within the standard refrains that speech, but not writing, exists in all human communities and speech is naturally acquired, but writing requires instruction. Yet, only a passing familiarity with sign languages and a moment of contemplation are sufficient to realize that sound is not a defining characteristic of language (Kyle and Woll 1985; Sandler and Lillo-Martin 2011). Undeniably, speech is the most natural language medium for normal hearing individuals, but that alone does not privilege it over writing or signing, and all should be regarded as alternative mediums of expression linked through conventions that allow for approximate transformations of linguistic content across mediums.

Misconceptions rarely stand alone; rather they tend to become enmeshed with other confusions. Thus, the *language is speech* misconception has become merged with the further confusion that writing is simply a means of making speech visible. In recent times, the idea has undoubtedly gained wider circulation due to the famous work by DeFrancis (1989), entitled *Visible speech: The diverse oneness of writing systems*, but, as Harris (2009: 46) notes, the naïve assumption can be traced back to Graeco-Roman antiquity. Harris further clarifies that, even though they sometimes function in a complementary manner, speech and writing are “completely independent, having quite different semiological foundations” (p. 46).

Powell (2009) demonstrates the tendency for scholars to define writing primarily in terms of speech by citing a number of examples, but, it must suffice here to just note the straightforward substitution with *utterance* within the representative definition provided by Daniels (1996a: 3; 2009: 36), given his prominence within writing systems research, where “writing is defined as a *system of more or less permanent marks used to represent an utterance in such a way that it can be recovered more or less exactly without the intervention of the utterer*” (original italics). In contrast, Powell (2009: 13) states “writing is a *system of markings with a conventional reference that communicates information*” (original italics), which is preferable in avoiding the common pitfall of linking writing to language only via speech. Still, some might regard Powell’s definition as being somewhat incomplete, as it alone tells us little about the relationships between language, speech and writing, but, in fairness, the elusive challenge of clearly elucidating those complex relationships cannot fall to any single definition, but is, rather, a task for the complete typology of writing systems, as a collection of coherent categories and terminology (i.e. definitions).⁶

⁶ Powell (2009) does not ignore the larger issue, because just prior to providing his definition of writing, he also comments that the “relationship between the sounds of human speech and graphic material symbols that represent such sounds in lexigraphic writing is a central problem” (p. 13).

2.2 Typological categories and terminology

The preferred term – whether taxonomy, classification, or typology – varies across the different disciplines of scientific and academic research, but the general enterprise of attempting to bring order to various phenomena is unquestionably a hallmark of human intelligence. However, given that fuzzy boundaries are rather ubiquitous, it must also be acknowledged that, in reflecting certain opinions about what to emphasize, typologies are, to some degree, always arbitrary in nature. Notwithstanding the near axiomatic status of the claim that no *pure* writing systems exist (DeFrancis and Unger 1994; Gelb, 1963; Trigger, 2004), still, for typologies to be as instructive as possible, the distinctions employed in differentiating systems should strive both to meaningfully reflect the dominant principles underlying scripts and to employ consistent and informative terminology in signaling the principles (Joyce 2011).⁷

Although some typology proposals have explored alternative formats (i.e. DeFrancis and Unger 1994; Rogers 2005; Sproat 2000), many classifications have utilized inverted-tree diagrams, where category distinctions are represented as diverging branches (i.e. Gelb 1963; Sampson 1985; DeFrancis 1989; Powell 2009). In illustration of the basic approach, Figure 1 presents Sampson's (1985) classification of writing systems which is generally representative of the inverted-tree format.

As the present discussion broadly moves from higher to lower classification categories, the first category/term that warrants comment is *semasiography* (*meaning, signification + writing*). The term was coined by Gelb (1963), in his seminal book *A study of writing*, to be an inclusive term for various symbolic devices for conveying general meanings. The category has been included within a number of classifications from Gelb (1963), Diringer (1962), Haas (1993), Sampson (1985) to Rogers (2005) and Powell (2009).⁸ Arguably, the category has some merit within a

⁷ Anderson's (1992: 322) comments about typologies of language succinctly capture the ideal; "We can conclude that the parameters of a typology ought to be ones from which something follows: that is, they ought to identify groups of properties that co-vary with one another, so that knowing how one thing works entails knowing about others as well, as a direct consequence of whatever it is that motivates the typological labels". In contrast, Sampson's (in press: 2) comments allude more to the difficulties of characterizing the dominant principles; "in classifying scripts it is necessary to define a range of ideal types, and to bear in mind that real examples rarely or never perfectly exemplify the type under which they are categorized".

⁸ Sampson (1994) has subsequently stressed that, rather than arguing for the existence of such systems, his intention was conjectural in nature (as the dotted line in his (1985) figure sought to indicate) and merely speculating on "whether there might ever be a semasiographic system comparable in expressive power to a spoken language" (pp. 119–120). Within a glossary entry, Rogers (2005) defines "semasiographic writing" as an "alternative name for semantic writing system" (p. 297); the term he uses. Rogers (2005) argues for the existence of one semantic writing system in Bliss symbols (Bliss 1965), which he discusses at some length, although Sproat (2010), who also discusses Blissymbolics in detail, stresses the limitations of Blissymbolics as a writing system.

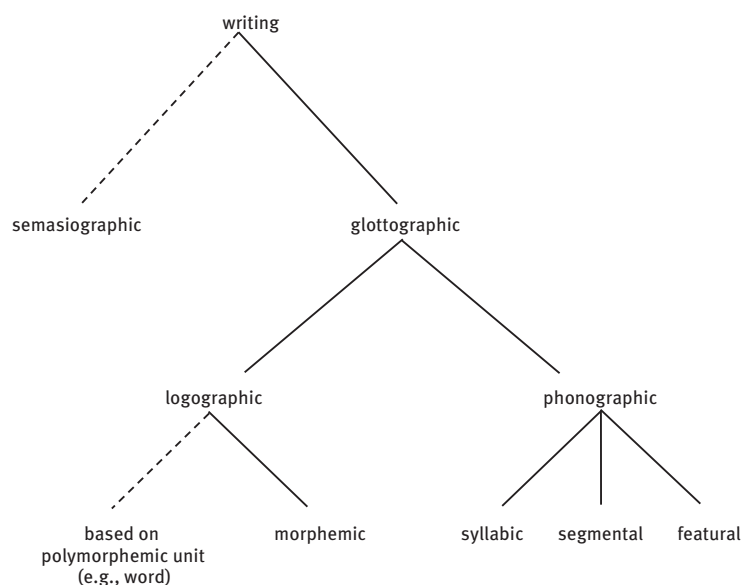


Fig. 1: Sampson's (1985) classification of writing systems.

broader classification of symbols or pictorial representations, but, as DeFrancis (1989) forcefully argues, it is vital to recognize that forms of semasiography are always extremely limited in what they can express. Consistent with DeFrancis' (1989) classification, a natural outcome of correctly regarding forms of semasiography as *nonwriting*, or, at best, as only *partial writing*, is the realization that the semasiography category falls just outside the scope of a typology of writing systems. However, typology proposals that include semasiography invariably differentiate it from some other category, such as the contrast with *glottography* (*speech + writing*) within Sampson's (1985) classification or with *lexigraphy* (*word + writing*) within Powell's (2009) classification. Although Powell (2009: 37) appears, at one point, to endorse the literal interpretation of lexigraphy in glossing it as "writing with words", from his definition of lexigraphy – "writing in which the signs are attached to necessary forms of speech" (p. 51) – it becomes clear that the superficial difference from glottography is essentially immaterial. It is not hard, however, to perceive the pervasive influence of the *language is speech* misconception behind both these terms.⁹

⁹ Given Powell's (2009) remonstrations against the confusions surrounding writing and, in particular, the first popular one cited in footnote 1 above (namely, "the illusion that ... *function* of writing is to represent speech" (p. 1), his definition of lexigraphy is all the more perplexing!

Before turning to the three linguistic levels at which writing systems basically function, there is one further typological demarcation that requires attention, because, arguably, the essence of the distinction has been one of the most elusive to conceptualize and has been one of the major sources of confusions about writing (Joyce and Borgwaldt 2011). Using the earliest and most problematic terminology, the division was once labeled as being between *phonography* (*sound* + *writing*) and *ideography* (*idea* + *writing*).¹⁰ However, now that the illusion associated with ideography – essentially, that it is possible to have a full system of writing based solely on *graphs* that directly express *ideas* independently of language – has largely been dispelled,¹¹ the contrast is usually framed as being between phonography and *logography* (*word* + *writing*). The deeper significance of this typological division becomes clearer once one realizes that it is essentially the same as the *pleremic* and *cenemic* contrast within the classification proposed by Haas (1976, 1983). The most important of the three binary choices within Haas' classification scheme is *empty-informed*, or *cenemic-pleremic* from the Greek words for *empty* and *full*, respectively. According to Haas' (1978, 1983) terminology, cenemic writing systems only represent sounds (i.e. phonography), but, in pleremic writing systems, the graphic units are *semantically informed* in denoting both sounds and meanings; the modern exemplar being Chinese characters. As Joyce (2011) points out, the enduring dilemma for advocates of the *language is speech* perspective is to provide an adequate account of the existence and function of the non-phonological, or semantic elements, of Chinese characters if writing is merely representing speech.

At this point, it is useful to unpack a little more the statement that writing systems represent language. Simply put, it turns out that there are just three levels of linguistic structure at which writing – as a system of marking with a conventional reference – can function in (generally) systematic ways in representing language – as a system of contrastive symbols that facilitates human communication and cognition. These are the morpheme, syllable, and phoneme levels. Moreover, the implications for a typology of writing systems should be immediately obvious; it should consist of three basic typological categories that correspond to these levels and these should be clearly distinguished with terminological labels that are both informative and consistent. Unfortunately, misconceptions and confusions also exist at these levels.

¹⁰ Taylor (1883) proposed one of the earliest classifications of writing systems. It consisted of 1. pictures, 2. pictorial symbols, 3. verbal signs, 4. syllabic signs, and 5. alphabetic signs, where (1–3) were referred to as ideograms and (4–5) as phonograms (as cited, for example, in Daniels 1996, 2001; DeFrancis 1989; Diringer 1962; Hill 1967; Trigger 2004).

¹¹ As Sproat (2010: 183) comments, it is “most unfortunate” that the Unicode Consortium adopted the term ideograph to refer to Chinese characters.

Taking the morpheme level first, the main problem appears to be blind conservatism. As Joyce (2011) argues, given the consensus amongst scholars of writing systems (Daniels 1996, 2001; Fischer 2001; Gnanadesikan 2009; Hill 1967; Kess and Miyamoto 1999; Rogers 2005; Sampson 1985; Taylor 1988) that *morphography* is a more precise typological label than logography, typologies should cease to perpetuate this particular confusion. The sheer number of symbols necessary for a purely word-based writing system means that the only level above the syllable level that a writing system can function at is the morpheme level.¹²

Turning next to the syllable level, or *syllabography* category, although failures to consistently apply coherent criteria are highly endemic among typologies of writing systems, the ramifications are especially conspicuous at this level. The appropriate criteria must be the linguistic level that is predominately represented by the unitary symbols of the writing system. If it is the syllabic level, then the writing system should be classified as being syllabographic, irrespective of whether or not the symbols only provide approximate indications of a target syllable and irrespective of whether or not they possess internal structure or share visual similarities. As testimony to Daniels' (2001: 68) observation that the "key to the history of writing is the primacy of the syllable", it is hardly surprising that there should be a few variations in how syllabographic writing is actually realized, but, for a principled typology, it is vital to preserve the integrity of the linguistic level and to locate further method demarcations at a new level within the typology. Despite his keen insight about the significance of the syllable, Daniels' (1990, 1996, 2001, 2009) classification is perhaps the most influential example of a typology that is greatly undermined by the basic confounding problem. The classification consists of six categories of 1. logosyllabary (morphosyllabary), 2. syllabary, 3. abjad, 4. abugida, 5. alphabet, and 6. featural.¹³ However, as a number of these category labels are relatively unfamiliar, a little further explanation is probably required for the full extent of the typology problem to become apparent. Starting with *abjad*, which refers to a writing system where each character stands for a consonant, such as scripts used for Semitic languages, in contrast, *abugida* refers to a writing system where each character stands for a consonant accompanied by a particular vowel and combinations of the consonant and other vowels are indicated by additions to the base symbol, such as scripts used for various Indic languages. Analogous to

¹² In contrast to the phonological analysis of words within cenic writing systems, Hill (1967) astutely notes that the analysis of word meaning for pleremic writing systems naturally settles on the morpheme; the smallest element of linguistic meaning.

¹³ Daniels' (1990, 1996, 2001, 2009) justifies his proposals of abjads and abugidas by claiming they solve the problem of traditional classifications, such as Gelb (1963) which zealously presented the alphabet as telos (for further discussion of Gelb's classification, also see Coulmas (1996), Rogers (2005), Sproat (2000) and Trigger (2004)).

the term *alphabet* being derived from the names of the first two letters, *alpha* + *beta*, Daniels coined the term *abjad* from the first letters of the Arabic script and the term *abugida* similarly from the Ethiopic script. Moreover, the *featural* category refers to writing systems where the shapes of the characters correlate with phonetic features of segments, and the category was first proposed by Sampson (1985) solely for Korean hangŭl. From a typological perspective, however, Daniels' classification is undeniably confusing heterogeneous typological criteria in its mixture of linguistic levels (categories 1 and 2) with exemplar names (categories 3, 4, and 5) together with a description of grapheme structure (category 6). The serious consequence is that these typological categories essentially obscure the key point that syllabography is the common underlining principle for *syllabaries* (basically separate symbols), *adjads* (under-specification of the target syllable's vowel), *abugidas* (extensions to graphemes for core syllables) and *featural* (grapheme gestalt). Moreover, limited appreciation for the importance of maintaining coherent typological conventions is also apparent in a number of muddled compound labels, such as *consonantal alphabet* for *abjad* (Gnanadesikan 2009) and *alphasyllabic* for *abugida* (Bright 1999; Swank 2008), which fail as informative typological labels on the two counts of not consistently indicating the salient linguistic level and not sufficiently explaining grapheme structure. While stressing the clear logical imperative that, in order to preserve the significance of the linguistic level, finer demarcations of syllabographic writing systems must be located at a lower typological level, still, I readily defer to other researchers more familiar with the relevant scripts for appropriate category proposals, perhaps along the lines suggested in Faber (1992).

The ignorant hand of conservatism is also a major source of distortion at the final linguistic level of phonemic writing. Despite Diringer's (1962: 24) claim that "alphabetic writing has within the past three thousand years assumed such importance as to deserve a category of its own", the practice of labeling the category after its sole exemplar is absolutely antithetical to the objectives of a typology to be informative and consistent (Coulmas 1996; Hill 1967). From the perspective of illustrating the possible relationships between language and writing, it is vital to appreciate two related points about the phonemic writing system that consists of symbols for both consonants and vowels. The first is that all alphabets trace back to the Greek alphabet which "was a single invention that took place at a single time" (Powell 2009: 231) and the second, which also underscores its uniqueness, is the unnaturalness of phoneme segmentation, which Faber (1992) argues to be consequence of alphabetic writing rather than being a necessary precursor.

Taking the primary objective of the typology of writing systems to be in elucidating the fundamental relationships that mediate between contrastive symbols of language and the contrastive symbols of writing, clearly, it is most appropriate to base its core categories on the salient levels of linguistic structure. However, it is also equally clear that a single level of typological categories alone is insufficient

to adequately capture all the subtle nuances of writing systems. In addition to the especially thorny issue of how to meaningfully distinguish between various ways of realizing syllabography, which, as already noted, requires an additional typology level, another highly elusive issue, as also hinted at earlier, is that these basic typological categories are idealizations that are rarely realized by actual scripts. These two aspects are, arguably, related, but they undoubtedly represent serious challenges for the development of the comprehensive typology of writing systems. It is, therefore, instructive to briefly comment on a few typological proposals where the issue of typological *purity* is more visible. The first is what DeFrancis and Unger (1994) refer to as a *realistic* view of writing system typology. Assuming a theoretical continuum between *pure phonography* and *pure logography*, DeFrancis and Unger argue that the actual range of writing falls within the middle area of the continuum, in rejection of typologies they regard as *naïve* in locating two distinct groupings of writing systems separately towards the two extremes with an empty middle space.¹⁴ In more radical departures from the common tree-format typology, first, Sproat (2000) and, subsequently, Rogers (2005) adopt a similar strategy to locating writing systems within a theoretical space defined by two dimensions; namely, the type of phonography (five categories on horizontal axis) and the amount of logography/morphography (along vertical axis) involved within a system. In illustration, Figure 2 presents Rogers' (2005) classification of writing systems, which, although adopting Sproat's (2000) basic strategy, differs in two respects; namely in the labels for the five phonography categories and a preference for the term morphology over logography.

However, two problems stand out immediately. The first is that the relative placements of different writing systems on the proposed continuum or dimensions are highly subjective in not being based on any clear methodology for measuring or quantifying varying degrees of principle *purity*.¹⁵ The second problem is that, in positioning the five categories along the phonography dimension, they are essentially framed as being mutually exclusive (at least, as the basic strategy has been instantiated by Sproat (2000) and Roger (2005)). Arguably even more serious than the first problem, this seems to completely miss the deeper insight that principle

¹⁴ Of the six writing systems singled out by DeFrancis and Unger within the middle area, Finnish is located furthest towards the pure phonography extreme, with French and English progressively closer to the center, while Chinese is positioned furthest towards the pure logography side, with Japanese more central than Chinese and then Korean more central still.

¹⁵ In fairness, it may be noted that, despite an extensive literature on the related notions of orthographic depth or orthographic transparency, practical methodologies for measuring and cross-linguistic comparison of principle consistency are still largely under development. For example, Neef and Balestra (2011) propose a method for calculating graphematic transparency for phonemic (alphabetic) writing systems that yields a graphematic transparency value (g-t value).

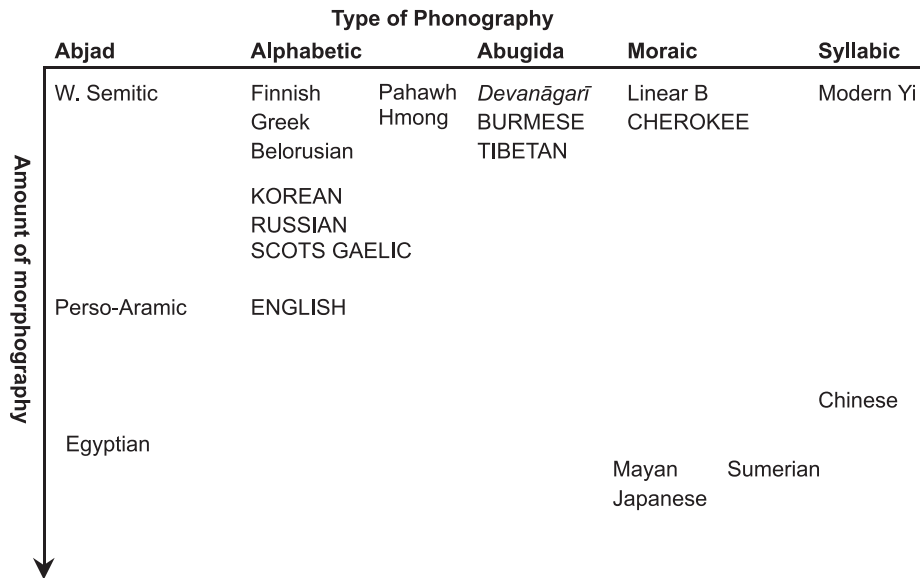


Fig. 2: Rogers' (2005) classification of writing systems (capitals show deep systems; regular type, shallow).

inconsistencies are a direct reflection of a particular script simultaneously utilizing a mixture of principles, of which morphography is one rather than being a separate dimension.

One of the crucial challenges for the typology of writing systems is to discern the core set of principles functioning within the apparent diversity of the world's scripts (Joyce and Borgwaldt 2011). As Coulmas (1996) rightly notes, the typology of writing systems must find the right balance between too many categories that ignore key commonalities and too few categories that obscure important distinctions. Accordingly, the present discussions have been largely shaped by two typological tenets. The first is that the primary categories of the typology must be the relevant linguistic levels – either the morpheme, syllable or phoneme levels – while the second is that, because further demarcations – whether attempting to capture different methods of realization or principle mixtures – are typologically different in nature, they require additional levels of categories. If typology research fails to adhere to coherent classification principles, regrettably, the consequences can only be misconceptions and confusions.

3 Handful of script examples

This short section seeks to be more illustrative in nature and consists of brief outlines for a small sampling of scripts. In contrast to the abstract dimension to the term *writing system*, *script* refers to the specific set of graphic symbols that is conventionally employed to express the written medium forms of a specific language based on the functional relationship between linguistic and graphic units.

3.1 Chinese-Chinese characters

The first language-script pairing singled out for specific comment is that of Chinese-Chinese characters (漢字 (traditional), 汉字 (simplified)¹⁶ /hanzi/ *Han character*). Despite its long history and wide-spread use, there is, undoubtedly, much to Sproat's (2010: 34) keen observation that "few writing systems have been more misunderstood than Chinese". Not surprisingly, these misunderstandings have been deeply entangled with the general confusions surrounding writing and the typology of writing systems. Since DeFrancis' (1989) classification, Chinese characters are often categorized as being morphosyllabic (or, less precisely, as logosyllabic) (Coulmas 1992; Daniels 1990, 1996, 2001, 2009; DeFrancis 1989; Hung 2012; Mair 1996; for related discussion, see also Joyce 2011). However, as discussed earlier, without clear typological conventions, such compound labels are far from informative and are open to subjective interpretation. For instance, DeFrancis' (1989) own analysis greatly stresses the phonetic value of the syllable and, while claiming not to deny the presence of morphemic (semantic) reference completely, largely fails to provide adequate account of it (Joyce 2011).

One important characteristic of the Chinese language is that it is a tonal language (Coulmas 2003; Hung 2012; Powell 2009; Rogers 2005), but, as already suggested, the implications of tone representation for typologies of writing systems have largely been ignored (Roberts 2011). The following (traditional/simplified) Chinese characters are frequently used in illustration of the five tones, with both diacritic and number marking conventions.

(1)	媽 妈	flat	mā ma1	<i>mother</i>
	麻 麻	rising	má ma2	<i>hemp</i>
	馬 马	falling-rising	mǎ ma3	<i>horse</i>
	罵 骂	falling	mà ma4	<i>scold</i>
	嗎 吗	neutral	ma ma (ma5, ma0)	<i>final interrogative particle</i>

¹⁶ The main thrust of writing reforms, or script engineering, efforts by the People's Republic of China has been the simplification of Chinese characters in terms of their stroke counts (Coulmas 2013; Mair 1996; Sproat 2010).

Hung (2012) provides a concise introduction to a number of important aspects relating to the use of Chinese characters as the Chinese writing system.¹⁷ These include brief comments about the complex relationships between the character and the morpheme, between the character and the syllable, and between the character and the word. For instance, the relationship between the character and the morpheme is not always one-to-one, as words like the two-character/mono-morpheme 葡萄 *grapes* clearly demonstrate. Similarly, the relationship between the character and the syllable is far from simple, where the incidences of homophones are very high, given that there are many more characters compared to the approximately 400 basic syllables (or about 1,300 with tone distinctions). Moreover, the relationship between the character and the word is also rather complex, where, for example, 筆 meaning *brush* can be a component of many compound words, such as 原子筆 *atom + brush = ballpoint pen* and 鉛筆 *lead + brush = pencil*. Hung (2012) also describes some other characteristics, such as the principles of character-formation and word-formation, respectively, as well as the lack of clear word boundaries.

- (2) 这是简体字书写的中文例句
- (3) zhe4/ shi4/ jian3ti3zi4/ shu1xie3/ de0/ zhong1wen2/ li4ju4
- (4) This/ is/ simplified characters/ write/ POSSESSIVE/ Chinese/ example sentence
- (5) This is a Chinese sentence example written in simplified Chinese characters

The Chinese-Chinese characters example (2) is written with simplified Chinese characters. The slashes in both transcription (3) and gloss (4) are indicating character and word segmentations.

3.2 Japanese-Japanese writing system

The next example pairing is of the Japanese language and the unique collection of scripts that constitute the Japanese writing system. The mixture includes morphographic kanji (漢字 *Chinese characters*), the two separate syllabographic scripts of

¹⁷ However, one serious problem that is frequently missed from general introductions of Chinese is the increasing use of Chinese characters in transcribing foreign names and foreign words entering the Chinese language. From the perspective of writing systems, the blurring of the morphographic and syllabographic principles is likely to have more serious, far-reaching consequences for Chinese than character simplification or limitation issues. Mair (1996: 201) provides one example and comments on the confusion potential, as follows: “Thus, because of semantic interference, readers frequently misinterpret such expressions as 特納廣播電台 Tè nà Guǎngbō Diàntái as ‘Special Acceptance Broadcasting Station’ instead of as ‘Turner Broadcasting Station’”.

hiragana (平仮名) and *katakana* (片仮名), and phonemic *rōmaji* (ローマ字 literally *Roman alphabet*), which are employed together in complementary ways (Joyce 2011; Joyce, Hodošček and Nishina 2012; Smith 1996).

As Joyce (2011) documents, the literature on writing systems frequently describes the Japanese writing system as being the most complicated writing system. A number of the factors that undeniably contribute to the impressions of complexity have been discussed at some length elsewhere, such as the multi-script nature (Joyce, Hodošček and Nishina 2012), the dual-readings system of Sino-Japanese and Native-Japanese pronunciations associated with kanji (Joyce, Masuda and Ogawa 2014),¹⁸ the internal structures of kanji (Joyce, Masuda and Ogawa 2014), and the word-formation principles underlying two-kanji compound words (Joyce 2002, 2011), as well as the legacies of myths and confusions about kanji and their appropriate classification within the writing systems typology (Joyce 2011).

- (6) これは漢字かな混じりで書かれた日本語の例である。
- (7) kore/ wa/ kanji-kana-majiri/ de/ kakareta/ nihongo/ no/ rei/ dearu
- (8) This/ TOPIC/ kanji-and-kana-mixture/ INSTRUMENTAL/ write-PASSIVE-PAST/ Japanese/ POSSESSIVE/ example/ COPULA
- (9) This is a Japanese language example written in the Japanese writing system

Although katakana and *rōmaji* are missing from (6), it represents an authentic mixture of kanji (mainly nouns, verb and adjective stems) and hiragana (mainly grammatical elements). For instance, 書かれた /ka.kareta/ *written* consists of 書 representing the verb stem plus hiragana symbols for the PASSIVE-PAST inflections. While alternative terms exist, 漢字かな混じり (literally *mixture of kanji and kana*) is admittedly a less formal translation of ‘Japanese writing system’.

3.3 Korean-Hangŭl

The script associated with the Korean language is known as hangŭl (한글). Among the scripts of the world, it is significant for a couple of reasons. The first is that

¹⁸ Through the historical process of borrowing and adapting Chinese characters for the Japanese language, kanji have come to be associated with two separate lexical strata; Native-Japanese and Sino-Japanese. Thus, for example, 書 *write* is associated with the Native-Japanese pronunciation of /ka/ in the verb citation form of 書く /ka.ku/ *to write*, but the Sino-Japanese pronunciation of /sho/ is generally used when the kanji is a component of Sino-Japanese compound words, such as 書道 /shodō/ *write + way = calligraphy*.

history records its deliberate invention and promulgation by King Sejong the Great in 1446. The second is that it is often described as being one of the most scientifically designed and efficient scripts in the world (Gnanadesikan 2009; King 1996; Sproat 2010).

However, a third reason, which is more important for the present context, is that there has also been considerable debate among scholars concerning the appropriate classification of hangŭl within the typology of writing systems, which is, naturally, in turn, also highly illustrative of the misconceptions and confusions about writing systems. As noted earlier, Sampson (1985) specifically proposed the category of featural system for hangŭl, because the shapes of some consonant components indicate place of articulation, such as velar ㄱ /k/, dental ㅅ /s/, and bilabial ㅁ /m/. Although King (1996) refers to hangŭl as being a phonemically-based alphabet, he also acknowledges Taylor's (1979) categorization as an alphabetic syllabary because hangŭl are always written as a syllable block, such as 한 /han/ which consists of ㅎ /h/, ㅏ /a/ and ㄴ /n/.

Although not always acknowledged within linguistic descriptions of hangŭl, King insightfully points out (1996: 223) that the "history of Korean orthography is characterized by a tug-of-war between phonemicists and morphophonemicists".¹⁹ The observation that orthographic principles can be mixed even with a script specifically designed to function at a particular level of linguistic structure would seem to have serious implications for thinking about principle consistency.

(10) 이것은 한글로 쓴 한국어의 예이다

(11) ikes-un/ hankul-lo/ ssun/ hankuke-ui/ yey-ita

(12) this-TOPIC/ Hangul-INSTRUMENTAL/ write-RELATIVE/ Korean language-POSSESSIVE/ example-COPULA-DECLARATIVE

(13) This is a Korean language example written with hangŭl

The spaces in (10) segment hangŭl syllable blocks into word + particle units known as *eojeol* groups. The slash segmentations in (11) and (12) are also based on *eojeol*, where, for instance, 한글로 consists of 한글 /hangŭl/ plus 로 /lo/ with *particle*. Similarly, the infinitive form of *to write* 쓰다 /ssuta/ becomes 쓴 /ssun/ write-RELATIVE.

¹⁹ According to personal communications from two Korean research colleagues, this basic tug-of-war is also at the heart of the orthography divide between South and North Korea.

3.4 American Sign Language-SignWriting

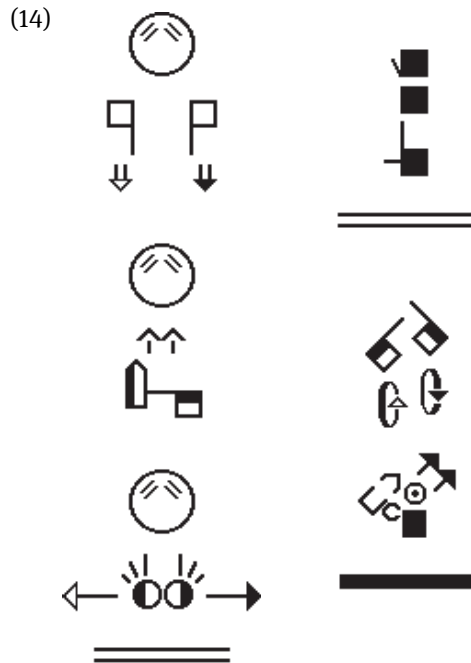
The final language-script pairing to be discussed is that of American Sign Language (ASL) and SignWriting.²⁰ In particular, this pairing warrants brief comment because of the profound implications that writing systems for sign languages have for the typology of writing systems.²¹ Although alluded to earlier, there is one point that bears repeating in this context. As sign languages provide indisputable testimony against the *language is speech* position, sound cannot be regarded as a defining characteristic of language. Moreover, as writing systems primarily represent language at either the morpheme, syllable or phoneme levels, and as it is essentially meaningless to refer to phonology in connection with sign languages, the natural inference is that writing systems for sign languages must function primarily at the morpheme level.²²

SignWriting was first developed by Valerie Sutton in 1974 from a notational system for dance (www.signwriting.org/; Coulmas 2013; Hopkins 2008; Thiessen 2011; van der Hulst and Channon 2010). SignWriting symbols are formed from component elements. There are seven categories of component symbols for hands, movement, dynamics and timing, head and face, body, detailed location, and punctuation. Within his analysis of components for encoding purposes, Thiessen (2011) counted slightly more than 35,000 symbols, with most being variations of 639 base symbols.

20 Firstly, notwithstanding Sandler and Lillo-Martin's (2001) assertion that sign languages have been recognized as bona fide linguistic systems since at least the 1960s, it should be stressed that ASL is not a gestural system related to the English language. Rather, ASL refers to the sign language used predominantly by the deaf communities in the United States and English-speaking regions of Canada. Secondly, I accept that referring to ASL-SignWriting as a language-script pairing is not totally consistent with the adopted definitions. More accurately, SignWriting refers to a writing system in the sense of the set of potential symbols that can be created from the component elements, of which only a subset (script) might be utilized in presenting a particular sign language. According to its website, SignWriting is used in more than 40 countries to represent different sign languages.

21 Even though the discussion of typology of writing systems in Section 2 focused primarily on categories and terminology issues, a considerable number of important typologies were noted, albeit only fleetingly in most cases. It is, however, particularly noteworthy that none of them attempt to incorporate writing systems for sign languages within their classifications. Although van der Hulst and Channon's (2010) discussion of notation systems for sign languages has a section on writing systems, far from proposing a typology, their main focus appears to be make distinctions between writing, transcription and coding systems.

22 While readily acknowledging that my familiarity with sign languages is extremely limited, attempts to draw parallels between the internal structures signs and phonology – which, from Sandler and Lillo-Martin's (2001) chapter on natural sign languages, appear to be fairly common practice – only seem to invite confusion. For instance, as evident in the following comment from van der Hulst and Channon (2010: 11): "SignWriting might at first appear to be a (word- or morpheme-based) semagraphic system, but it is actually phonographic: the graphs depict aspects of the phonological form of signs".



(15) This is an American Sign Language example written with SignWriting.

(16) THIS/HERE EXAMPLE SENTENCE, ASL, SIGNWRITING.

(17) This example sentence is in ASL and SignWriting.

ASL-SignWriting (14) is read in columns from top-to-bottom and left-to-right.²³ Although the process of obtaining (14) started from (15), the Deaf informant explained that he avoided “written with” because it felt more natural in ASL to express the content according to the gloss in (16), with a more direct translation in (17). The common element in the first three symbols indicates brow raising (the circle represents the face) for topicalization, with the horizontal double lines indicating a pause. Between the final two symbols, the pause signifies “and”. The final solid horizontal line indicates a period. In illustration of its iconic nature, the WRITE element of SIGNWRITING consists of a left open palm (white hollow symbol) here signifying *surface* and a thumb to index closure here signifying *holding a pen*, together with double arrows to indicate direction of repeated movement here signifying *movement of pen-holding hand over a surface in writing*.

²³ Although the direction of writing in SignWriting was initially according to the left-to-right and top-to-bottom convention of English text, it seems that the community of SignWriting users find the top-to-bottom and left-to-right direction more natural (Hopkins 2008; SignWriting).

4 Concluding remarks

Much of this chapter has argued for the development of a coherent and consistent typology of writing systems as essential for overcoming many of the confusions surrounding writing and to gain deeper understandings of how writing systems and scripts actually function. This final section offers a few concluding remarks about some of the adjacent research areas where the misconceptions and confusions about writing have also cast distorting shadows.

Clearly, one such area is writing reform and its impact on literacy levels; related issues that have recently been explored by two highly prominent writing systems scholars. In the more recent, Coulmas (2013: 125) comments realistically, based on his careful examination of the complex interactions between the linguistic, social, political and economic aspects of writing reform, that “the perpetuation of inconsistencies and the introduction of new ones seem an inevitable side-effect of writing reforms”. Within his slightly earlier discussion of literacy, Sproat (2010) also touches on script engineering with the intent of raising literacy levels. In that context, he also reports on conducted correlation analyses, which indicate that “one factor that does not correlate with literacy is the complexity of the script” (p. 136), where complexity is based on code points for the basic script symbols. Although this is most interesting, clearly, as Sproat (2010) acknowledges, symbol set sizes alone are a blunt index of script complexity, which would also need to reflect other factors such as principle consistency. However, as noted earlier, reliable methods of assessing and comparing of script complexity and principle consistency are basically lacking.

Given the obvious relevance of writing systems research for research on visual word recognition and reading, it is quite understandable, even though most regrettable, that one also frequently encounters many misunderstandings about writing systems in those areas too. While acknowledging the gross simplifications for the sake of brevity here, visual word recognition – as the initial stage of a larger collection of cognitive processes underlying reading – is essentially about identifying the language symbol that is associated with a written symbol according to the principle of conventional reference utilized by a particular script. Obviously, how one approaches the modeling of the cognitive processes involved will heavily depend on how one (mis)understands the relationships between language and writing. The influence of the *language is speech* position is readily perceptible behind many models of reading that emphasize the role of phonology. For example, Perfetti and Dunlap (2008: 14) define two concepts that they claim to be universals of reading. The first, called the *language constraint of writing systems*, is that “writing systems encode spoken language, not meaning”, while the second, called the *universal phonological principle*, refers to a “generalization that word reading activates phonology at the lowest level of language allowed by the writing system”. However, one problem for models that stress that word recognition is essentially a process of

assembling a phonological symbol based on symbol-to-sound correspondences is the robust findings across writing systems of frequency or familiarity effects, where more frequently used, or more familiar, words are processed faster than less frequent or less familiar ones.

Based on his arguments that the peculiarities of the English-Latin alphabet writing system make it an *outlier* orthography, Share (2008) persuasively demonstrates how the dominance of an ‘Anglocentric research agenda’ within reading research has resulted in an excessively narrow focus on some issues, such as reading accuracy and phonological awareness, to the detriment of other issues, such as meaning access and modeling approaches. The focus of the present explication of writing systems and scripts – on the importance of developing a more coherent and consistent typology of writing systems – is similarly motivated by a deep concern for its significant and far-reaching implications not only for research in the areas of visual word recognition and reading, but for our basic understandings of writing and language in general.

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John A. Bateman

16 The integration of multimodal resources in documents: Issues, approaches and methods

Abstract: Nowadays, documents that do not combine text and rich varieties of images, ranging from pictures to graphs to infographics, all arranged within visual layouts that themselves contribute considerable flexibility in meaning, have become rare. Answering the question of how such diverse carriers of information manage to combine so as to give rise to coherent messages represents a considerable scientific challenge with substantial practical consequences. Methods and theories addressing the issue of integration constitute the main focus of the field of multimodality. Within multimodality, approaches for explaining how integration occurs have been proposed from very different starting points, including linguistics, information design, psychology, discourse theories, rhetoric as well as social action and interaction. In this article, important representatives of these approaches are summarised and contrasted, and potential applications outlined.

Keywords: multimodality, text-image relations, semiotics, discourse coherence, document design, empirical methods

1 Introduction

The use of written documents across all social niches and genres continues to grow rapidly within the vast majority of modern-day cultures. Moreover, following a period of marginalisation which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 1), reached its most extreme in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the combination of verbal language and other modes of expression, including all kinds of graphical, pictorial, typographical and layouting material, is now again sharply on the rise. The previously established restrictions of such combinations to particular genres, themselves sometimes marginalised as in comics or newspapers exhibiting more extravagant layout, are loosening considerably. There is also an accompanying rise in the cultural acceptance of mixed-modality documents as forms of artistic expression, as evidenced in the increasing consideration and awareness of graphic novels, sequential art and comics in both academic and public discourse. Even document types which have traditionally permitted the use of 'illustration', such as school textbooks, are making far more use of the technological advances available for presenting material of different kinds than previously.

This expansion is driven both by technological possibilities and consumer demand. In many areas presentational styles reminiscent of artefacts produced even as little as 20–30 years ago now appear old-fashioned and are unlikely to survive. But the issues here are significant far beyond questions of changing fashions and styles. It is generally assumed that the more varied forms of presentation pursued nowadays not only look different, or more attractive, but also that they can (or should) be in a position to support a broader range of communicative purposes more effectively than their less sophisticated forerunners. The extended technological capabilities now available for combining information from varied modes undoubtedly provide radically more freedom in design when constructing communicative artefacts. This freedom does not of itself, however, guarantee effective communication. Indeed, as is generally the case, increased freedom also opens the door to more possibilities for mistakes and for *ineffective* deployment of the resources available.

This makes it rather urgent that approaches to communication provide useful statements and analyses of multimodal presentation styles: such analyses need to be able to reveal deficiencies and provide for a deeper, more predictive theoretical understanding of just how multimodal documents operate. For the study of communication involving such artefacts, therefore, questions are increasingly raised concerning the conditions that must be fulfilled for combinations of presentational forms, or ‘modes’, to work together, i.e. to ‘integrate’ in a manner that supports intended communicative goals rather than distracting or confusing the ‘multimodal reader’. The purpose of this chapter is accordingly to present an overview of this growing area, foregrounding accounts which draw on a linguistic foundation in order to explain how the integration of multimodal resources within documents may function.

2 Social issues

The main factors driving the pursuance of investigations of multimodal resource integration at this time lie in the widespread and very diverse communicative purposes for which multimodal artefacts are being mobilised in society. As suggested above, there are now few domains where some kind of multimodal integration is not an issue. Questions of the use and consequences of varied presentational forms appearing in distinct media are thus on several research agendas. One point to be emphasised as we proceed is that appropriate responses to this task will often have to go beyond some of the disciplinary boundaries that have formed over the past thirty of forty years in the ‘area’. This applies both to the kind of data considered, which in the case of linguistics has tended to marginalise non-verbal aspects, and to the range of methods that are applied, challenging traditional distinctions between approaches that study more the ‘context’ of communication (mass media,

communication studies, etc.) and approaches that study the internal organisation of those artefacts being exchanged in communication (linguistics, psycholinguistics, semiotics, etc.).

Approaches that have arisen out of practical situations of communication have long been more flexible in this respect and have been less hampered by pre-decided disciplinary restrictions on subject matter or methodologies. Thus, for example, the investigations of Orlikowski, Yates and colleagues concerning business communication have, from the outset, accepted a broad range of modal contributions as germane to their work, identifying observable features both of the communicative situation including “text formatting devices, such as lists and headings, and devices for structuring interactions at meetings, such as agenda and chairpersons” and of the “communication medium (e.g., pen and paper, telephone, or face to face)” itself (Orlikowski and Yates 1994: 544). Both business and scientific communications now accept, and often even expect, multimodal artefacts as the medium of exchange. Many traditional business genres, such as annual reports, are nowadays considered to be essentially multimodal and achieve appeal to, and persuade, their readers via photographs, graphs, tables and so on. This trend probably reaches its most prominent exponents (although still contentious: cf. Tufte 2006) in the widespread use of presentational forms such as Microsoft’s PowerPoint or Apple’s Keynote.

Other areas affected by progressively multimodal development include bureaucratic communication such as forms, both traditional print-based and online newspapers, and many kinds of citizen-related information offerings, such as health advice (e.g., van Weert et al. 2011). In the first area, awareness concerning the need to present information in an intelligible manner has risen considerably in recent years, and this has in turn led to campaigns and legislation to ensure improved design of previously often impenetrable (non-)communicative artefacts. In this regard, improved deployment of typography and layout has already had a dramatic effect in several countries (cf. Jansen and Steehouder 1992; Delin et al. 2006), as has research based primarily on social science methodologies of usability and testing of recall of information (cf. Houts et al. 2006). An increasingly strong overlap with the areas of human-computer interface design and interface usability must also be recognised as interactions between users and documents now commonly occur online (cf. Schneiderman and Plaisant 2009). As a consequence, research on online document design and usability must be open to sources of input beyond those of ‘traditional’ document design, which have largely lacked well articulated notions of ‘interaction’ between user and information offering.

A further institutional context in which the combination of modes of information presentation has been studied is ‘education’ – here seen most broadly from infants to adult education. For example, there is considerable interest in multimodal combinations of texts and images intended even for very young children, such as that exhibited in ‘picturebooks’ where there is already substantial theoretical

discussion to draw upon (cf. Nikolajeva and Scott 2001). Here, as with most approaches to multimodal documents, there is a strong focus on just what kinds of meanings are made possible by the visual contribution – especially in cases where the verbal component may even be minimal or non-existent. There are also many studies concerning the design and use of textbooks – i.e. documents with the explicit function of socialising individuals into the social practices of their disciplines. Here, too, there is strong evidence that multimodal combinations of materials can contribute positively to learning when that combination is done appropriately (cf., e.g., Unsworth 2001; Mayer 2009). This becomes particularly important when the information expressed in the different modalities goes beyond ‘simply’ re-stating or illustrating meaning patterns already established verbally. For example, certain information, such as mathematical formulations or presentations of regularities in data, are not well captured in textual form and so the development of multimodal combinations over time has served an essential *enabling* function for scientific discourse (O’Halloran 2005). This also cross-cuts the considerable body of work from the perspective of *visualisation* in general (Bertin 1983; Tufte 1997), which itself now overlaps with information design (cf. Waller 1996). In all these areas, there is an awareness that multimodal combinations allow other meanings to be made than is the case within individual modes of presentation, such as verbal language. Explanatory accounts of just how this, in the phrase of Lemke (1998), *meaning multiplication* operates are still, however, fragmented.

The widespread deployment of multimodal presentational forms is closely followed as a social phenomenon in its own right in the media and communication sciences. Here the concern is to track how various styles of information presentation are received by their consumers. Styles studied span traditional newspapers, news reporting on television and newer forms of audiovisual media such as YouTube. Differences in audience take-up related to the media adopted and the forms of information presentation found in those media have already been identified, although few proposals for explanations for the differences are available. Some studies indicate that whereas print newspapers tend to leave recipients with an awareness of public events and issues, online news readers were in contrast more likely to remember business and other news topics (cf. Schönbach et al. 2005). Recipients thus interact differently with different media offerings concerning just what information they extract and retain. Such a, presumably, unintentional skewing of awareness of information should naturally be of broad social concern. Just what it is about information offerings in distinct media that directs attention, consumption and recall in this way remains an unanswered question.

Although there may well be external factors, such as the circumstances in which the news is consumed, the very different styles of multimodal presentations involved, including how users interact with these presentations, cannot be ruled out as playing a significant role. This concern has been addressed from several perspectives. The suggestion that distinct kinds of presentational forms have differ-

ent capabilities and tendencies in their shaping of meaning can, for example, be found in both media studies, as in the consideration of the ‘molding force’ of media specificities (Hepp 2012), and in social semiotic approaches to multimodality, in which distinct modes each bring their own affordances into play (Kress 2010). Psychological studies have also revealed significant aspects of document understanding related to multimodal design and integration. One potentially negative consequence of manipulating design elements, for example, is that an appropriately sophisticated *style* of presentation can serve to direct attention away from problematic content issues. In early work Glenberg et al. (1982) presented results that demonstrated that the confidence of students concerning their own self assessment of whether they had understood a text containing contradictions could be manipulated by the location of the contradictions in the text (early vs. late) and by the syntactic realisation of their information status (given vs. new). Schriver (1997: 227–231) builds on this in the context of document design and has started documenting further conditions under which an “illusion of knowing”, i.e. thinking that one has understood when in fact one has not, can be created. Appropriate attention to layout, phrasing and the relations between diagrams, text and so on can all give rise to misjudgements not only about what is being communicated but also about whether one has understood or not. Typography, layout and ‘visual style’ are all therefore important for supporting information integration involving differing modalities – simply because an artefact *appears* to conform to current good practice, it may be evaluated positively regardless of whether it actually delivers on that promise. Readers are consequently under the impression that such visual style is helping them integrate information when it may in fact be doing quite the opposite.

Related to these concerns, there are also studies where, when presented with poorly designed instructions for consumer electronics devices, almost all subjects, *regardless of age and gender*, tended to blame themselves for not being sufficiently intelligent to deal with modern technology rather than, for example, blaming the companies which should in practice have provided more usable documents (Schriver 1997: 211–223). The ability of particular styles of presentation to shape information presentation and its communication in detrimental ways has consequently been taken up with respect to several media. A particularly prominent example is offered by the condemnations of the style of information delivery encouraged in presentation software such as PowerPoint and Keynote from Tufte (2006) that we mentioned above, although Bucher and Niemann (2012) now offer a more balanced and empirically well-founded study.

The explosive growth of possibilities for presenting multimodal artefacts across the board has brought with it significant developments for both producers and consumers. For the former, there has been a rapidly increasing demand for training programmes that would place designers in a better position to deal with the multitude of possibilities technically available. This re-orientation has had a lasting effect and all such programmes nowadays consider, at least from a practical perspec-

tive, how information presentation can be designed in an integrated manner for effective communication (cf. Schriver 1997 and the formation of the Information Design Association (Waller 1996) and journals such as the now merged *Document Design* and *Information Design Journal*). For the potential consumers of the results of such multimodal design, the issues and opportunities mentioned above combine to raise the challenge of *multimodal literacy* – that is, just because information has been presented in various modes for some potential group of readers, it cannot be assumed that those readers will automatically know how to interpret the artefacts they are presented with. As the multimodal resources and their co-deployment become ever more complex, it is unlikely that readers will always make correct interpretative decisions. Indeed, it is straightforward to produce situations of cognitive overload which work in precisely the opposite direction to that intended. Attention can be placed under considerable stress by multimodal information presentation (e.g., Grimes 1991) and so appropriate organisation is particularly important. There are also empirical results suggesting that certain kinds of text-image relationships are naturally more challenging than others and this is reflected in the scores obtained by readers of differing reading abilities (Chan 2011). As a response to this problem, multimodal literacy is now well established as a research and practical development area in education (cf. Jewitt and Kress 2003; Anstey and Bull 2006). But there remains a formidable range of fundamental problems to address – due in no small part to a lack of well articulated theoretical accounts for describing the phenomenon of multimodality in the first place.

3 Cognitive issues

From a cognitive perspective, there are also many aspects concerning multimodal integration to consider. First, and most fundamentally, there is the general question of how information in different modalities is processed by the human brain in order to provide integrated meanings cohering to form a single ‘message’. This applies across the board to perception and so is by no means specific to multimodal integration within documents, where the task is probably somewhat simpler since the sources of the information to be combined are tightly constrained (by their presence within a document). The general discussion of whether internal representations may be more ‘propositional’ or ‘imagistic’ is an old one (cf. Pylyshyn 1973; Block 1981) and current models commonly adopt the ‘dual coding approach’ of Paivio (1986), in which different modalities with differing representational and processing properties co-exist.

Approaches concerning document multimodality naturally focus more on information that is carried visually, including both verbal (written) language and pictorial/diagrammatic components. However, this division on the basis of sensory channel is often not the most revealing as it tends to render certain semiotic modes

more similar than they are and others less similar than they are. The distinctions and similarities are best captured at a more abstract level of description where the notion of 'semiotic mode' can itself be more rigorously defined (cf. Bateman 2011). There is a considerable degree of cross-discipline and cross-method integration to pursue here and exciting research challenges are easy to find.

One tradition relevant for exploring mode integration has grown out of legibility studies. Here there has been a natural extension beyond issues of the readability of text to those of readability of combinations of text, graphics and typography/layout. Approaches in this area commonly employ psychological methods of investigation and address how visual properties of the artefacts investigated can enhance or compromise reading performance. Research on legibility was given a considerable new lease of life by the need to address screen-based media since the properties of such media are quite different from those of traditional print-and-paper based artefacts. In addition, whereas formerly legibility studies were broadly limited to considerations of 'micro'-typography, i.e. the spacing between characters and lines, margins, etc., extensions to consider larger issues of typography and layout are now common (cf. Waller 1990). Earlier views of layout as a kind of 'macro'-punctuation are thus giving way to considerations of relations between layout and document and argument structure. This then overlaps with an originally quite distinct tradition of investigation into processing details: the psychological investigation of discourse coherence. In this field readers are asked to read texts with certain implicit and explicit information in order to explore their mental construction of logical connections between information elements in the texts (cf. Sanders et al. 1992; Sanders and Spooren 2009). This is now similarly being extended to consider investigations of readers' behaviour when confronted with multimodal texts, a direction of study itself going back to investigations of the relations between visual and verbal information for the purpose of revealing more about human information processing. Both Bransford et al. (1972) and Glenberg and Langston (1992), for example, present early demonstrations that information provided in text and information provided visually combine during text comprehension and a broad range of research is now exploring various aspects of this phenomenon further.

Another direction of research relevant here explores the role of the visual perception system in the cognitive processes of information processing and information integration in visually-based representations. Here, models derived for visual perception in general are naturally applied to questions of multimodal integration. Increasingly popular as a tool of visual perception research is the use of eyetracking data and eyetracking experiments – a trend now considerably strengthened by the radical reduction in cost of the necessary equipment. Eye movements have long been known to consist of points of fixation joined by very rapid and smooth movements, called 'saccades', during which there is no visual perception. Since the portion of the retina that is able to deliver detailed information concerning the

visual field is actually very small, the eyes have to make many rapid movements in order to bring different areas of the visual field into focus (Duchowski 2003). The places where the eye fixates are not arbitrary and are determined by a range of features. Many of these features are low-level visual properties of the visual field, such as corners, edges, movement, etc.; however, others are more directly described in terms of higher-level considerations and reveal a clear task-and-goal-based influence (Yarbus 1967). Current models assume that the points of fixation are indicative of the deployment of *attention* during visual processing. Eye movements thus select the particular informational elements in the visual field most likely to satisfy or refute hypotheses relevant for the informational needs of the viewer at that point; a particularly detailed model of this kind and further references are given in Schill et al. (2001).

This intimate relationship assumed between points of fixation and attributions of attention made it natural to employ eye-tracking for investigating comprehension processes while reading text. Now this technique is also finding application in studies of multimodal document perception for both traditional print and screen-based media (Holsanova 2014). Points of fixation are taken to provide direct evidence of the elements which are being selected for integration by a reader/viewer during processing. Tracking these fixations therefore provides valuable material for the investigation of both which elements are combined and the influence of design decisions such as layout, typography and visual style on that selection (cf. Holsanova and Nord 2010; Liu et al. 2011; Bucher and Schumacher 2011). Previous suggestions of where readers might be looking and intuitive proposals for ‘reading paths’ thus become directly accessible to empirical investigation in concrete individual reading situations.

The fact that links are in general readily drawn between information presented verbally and visually raises again the issue of just what must be ‘shared’ for such linking to be possible. Since the basic properties of the materialities involved can be very different, one direction here has also been to consider the information provided by different modalities at higher levels of abstraction that may be able to span the gap. Stenning and Oberlander (1995), for example, attempt to characterise graphical representations in terms of the interaction they enter into for semantic interpretation and suggest that the *spatial* information inherent in graphics provides a concrete linking structure for possibly abstract and underspecified categories supportive of more effective reasoning. This relates to several discussions of the value of ‘externalised’ representations for ‘outsourcing’ cognitive effort. The essential idea here is that rather than maintaining a complex mental model or map of entities and their relationships, representation in an external spatially-extended form can take over much of the cognitive load. This is also the idea behind the proposal of Larkin and Simon (1987) that diagrams can be highly effective by virtue of their ability to index information spatially. ‘Diagrammatic reasoning’ of this kind now forms a very active field of research in its own right with regular conferences.

A further new avenue of research might then be to draw more explicit connections between research into layout and its effects on comprehension as a particular case of diagrammatic external representation. What certainly appears to be the case, however, is that the different properties of different media will also need to be considered, regardless of what kind of models or representations are explored.

4 Methodology

As the discussion up to this point has made clear, multimodal integration raises a substantial body of issues. Depending on starting point and goal, a variety of distinct methodologies may need to be combined in order to achieve results. Given the orientation of this volume as a whole to language sciences and verbal communication, the focus here will be multimodal integration studies that have their origin or strong connections with verbal communication. Such approaches typically attempt detailed analyses of particular communicative artefacts exhibiting the phenomena at issue, in the present case, ‘documents’. The corresponding methodologies are therefore oriented strongly to the ‘objects-of-analysis’ rather than to discussions of social or media contexts of use. These orientations need to be combined but, at the present time, there are still disciplinary boundaries in place that tend to work against this. These boundaries need to be vigorously attacked in order to open up space for progress. While focusing on properties of the objects of analysis, it is essential nevertheless not to lose connection with research that explores the *effects* of those objects of analysis on specific, individual recipients. This has been, and continues to be, one important role of the cognitive approaches described above. Useful results have also emerged from research on design where empirical work orients to usability studies and user-oriented design. Results significant and worth mentioning here include the following three design principles proposed in work on multimodal document design: *spatial contiguity*, which places related information in spatial proximity; *signalling*, by which explicit cues for interpretation are designed into the artefact; and ‘dual scripting’ which suggests that complex messages will be more effectively processed when *both* the visual layout and the semantic content being communicated are constructed so as to work in unison to guide the attention of the reader – that is, the text should say what is being argued (metadiscourse) *and* the visual layout should be employed to appropriately segment the argument as well. Holsanova and colleagues introduce and evaluate (generally quite positively) these principles on the basis of eye-tracking studies (Holsanova et al. 2008; Holsanova and Nord 2010).

Considered more generally, work within communication studies often suffers from relatively weak notions of the communicative artefacts being studied, however. This continues to limit the insights achieved concerning the mechanisms and principles of multimodal integration. In such approaches, the detailed internal or-

ganisation of the artefacts studied often remains only loosely described and the main emphasis falls on recipient response. This defocusing of the fine-grained details is related to the somewhat dated notions of communication typically employed (cf., e.g., Severin and Tankard 2009). These are based on traditional meaning-exchange models reminiscent of information theory (i.e. a speaker sends a message to the hearer across a medium, and the task involved is one of encoding and decoding that message according to a shared code). The substantial developments from our understanding of communication within linguistics and discourse studies concerning mechanisms of dynamic meaning construction are still often unacknowledged. Particularly important here are results that reveal the necessary *interaction* that takes place between receiver and message in constructing meanings (cf., e.g., Sperber and Wilson 1995 [1986]; Martin 1992; Asher and Lascarides 2003). Understanding this interaction demands fine-grained accounts of just what the recipient is *interacting with*, i.e. the objects of analysis themselves, in order to derive interpretations.

To approach the complex task of unravelling multimodal integration in documents at a more fundamental level thus requires rather more theoretical apparatus and stronger empirical methodologies to be effective. Here it is important to consider two inseparable facets of a broader methodological issue for exploring the nature of multimodal integration: (i) more finely articulated theoretical underpinnings are needed concerning just what multimodal artefacts are, and (ii) empirical investigations must be conducted with respect to those underpinnings. An empirical investigation is, after all, only as good as the precision and discrimination offered by its underlying research questions. Much here is offered by work drawing on verbal communication for inspiration, where models concerning integration of multimodal meanings within documents extend notions of communicative coherence as developed in studies of language and discourse as listed above. *Multimodal coherence* is then seen as a logical extension over and above the phenomenon of coherence within texts. As we shall see below, there are now multimodal versions of most of the approaches that have been taken from purely textual notions of coherence.

That linguistic research should move in this direction is itself a natural development. In studies of verbal communication, it has long been recognised that there is almost always ‘other’ material accompanying language when and where it occurs. Crystal (1974), for example, describes how there are several visual ‘levels’ of organised information presentation (such as typography and layout) around language whose precise function is unclear. These non-linguistic sources of information were for a considerable time characterised imprecisely as instances of ‘para-language’ – i.e. information that modifies and augments the meanings made in language. However, this can also be seen to make an unwarranted ‘logocentric’ assumption about the meaning contributions of many visually-carried aspects of documents. As argued in Bateman (2008), not all visual features can be assumed

to be modifying some 'main' linguistic message and, indeed, the relationship might in some cases even be reversed.

Early examples of what subsequently became 'multimodal linguistics' were pursued in the moves made towards text linguistics of the 1960s and 1970s since it was already clear that some genres of texts, perhaps most prominently advertisements, would demand accounts going beyond the boundaries of the linguistic system if critical aspects of how such texts function were not to be missed. This realisation was, however, generally restricted to the peripheries of linguistic concern. Combinations of visual and verbal material received attention in some branches of applied linguistics but could rarely be addressed analytically with any precision and analyses consequently remained exploratory and suggestive. After a brief flurry of treatments attempting to open up the area (e.g., Spillner 1982; Muckenhaupt 1986; Harms 1990), there was a lull in theoretical progress, due primarily to the still relatively undeveloped nature of text linguistics at that time.

Issues of mode combinations returned to prominence in the 1990s as the technological availability of multimodality as a design resource continued to explode. It was increasingly accepted that certain genres could only be sensibly treated as combined visual-verbal communicative artefacts – advertisements again offering the archetypal case (Cook 1992). There were then at this time several attempts to widen linguistic accounts so as to include aspects of the visual representations present. The linguistic models most commonly considered in order to account for the multimodal coherence of such genres were accounts that had been developed originally to describe relations between textual elements. These relations, such as those of discourse relations or cohesion, were intended to capture how information in texts could be combined to form coherent textual wholes. As a consequence, their multimodal variants were similarly seen as relations, in this case, however, as text-image or verbal-visual relations. Descriptions of this kind commonly built on the early discussions of Barthes ([1966] 1977), in which the possible inter-relationships between verbal and visual material were characterised in terms of where the main communicative import was taken to be and the degree of dependence that was exhibited between elements for their combined comprehension. Most approaches since show similar dimensions of organisation at work, although expressed in a variety of terms. Basic distinctions are presumed such as: (i) whether the textual material is dominant and the visual material simply illustrates without additional input, (ii) whether the verbal material is dominant and the textual material simply describes, or (iii) whether the verbal and textual material are equally dominant, each providing a necessary component of the intended meaning. The verbal and textual materials may in addition be considered with respect to their degree of interdependence: for example, (iv) whether the verbal and textual material build upon each other or (v) whether they pursue largely independent paths.

Although useful as a starting point, however, such descriptions show a range of problems that together make it difficult to reliably recognise the proposed rela-

tionships. This is often compounded by inappropriate confluences of content-issues – i.e. what is being expressed – and form-related issues – i.e. how the material is being presented. For example, some approaches appear to assume that a photograph is always more specific than any text simply because of the fact that it is a photograph, and hence a re-presentation (indexically created) of a concrete state of affairs (i.e. whatever was in front of the camera when the photograph was taken). Such a position neglects the critical issue of the intended *discourse* function of the element shown – it is highly unlikely, after all, that a photograph of some man and some woman standing by a pair of doors leading to toilet facilities would be interpreted as asserting that just the concretely depicted individuals are allowed access. It is thus the discourse placement of the visual material that determines its intended interpretation not the physical medium alone – a position foreshadowed in discussions by, for example, Goodman (1969) concerning the necessary preconditions for assigning interpretations to visual materials in general.

There are as a consequence many proposals for characterising the relations between modal contributions that are intended both to provide revealing and predictive analyses and to support more reliable application. While the extent to which the individual approaches succeed or not in these aims is still a matter of debate and experimentation, the approaches themselves fall into several relatively well demarcated categories. These can be identified quite usefully according to where they draw their principal organisational motivation from as follows:

- Multimodal relations can be modelled on *grammar*: approaches of this kind typically draw on categories developed within systemic-functional linguistics because there grammar is seen as a rich organisational framework whose fine-grained classification systems are assumed to be of far broader applicability than grammar alone. In particular, grammatical classifications are construed as socially-motivated functional resources for organising meaning. This has made it natural to consider these as heuristic models for investigating other modalities and mode combinations as well. Important here nonetheless is to realise that these organisations are not then assumed to be ‘grammatical’, even though grammar is their source of inspiration. Particular areas of grammar that have been adapted in this way to text-image relations are *clause combining*, *process-participant* structures (e.g., Martinec and Salway 2005), and *identifying relational* configurations (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2009).
- Multimodal relations can also be modelled on accounts of *cohesion*, the non-structural relationships assumed in systemic-functional linguistic approaches to be responsible for texture. Linguistic cohesion covers those textual relations where the interpretation of one element depends on another, as in all kinds of phoric relations (pronouns, etc.), ellipsis, conjunctions, reference and lexical collocations. Multimodal cohesion then draws on the non-structural nature of such relations in order to posit interpretative dependencies across information in textual and visual form (e.g., Royce 2007). Variations of this approach form

one of the most common techniques for dealing with multimodal artefacts despite (or perhaps because of) some inherent weaknesses. It is, after all, generally straightforward to posit many relations between diverse elements in any coherent document – which of these relations are actually significant for the meanings being made is, however, a separate, rather complex issue which tends to be under-addressed in cohesion-based descriptions.

- Multimodal relations can also be modelled on any of the various proposals made to account for larger-scale relations and text structuring mechanisms giving rise to dependences between elements in discourse. Examples here include: (a) frameworks based on *discourse semantics* that adopt logico-semantic and discourse conjunctive relations, again typically as proposed in systemic-functional approaches to text and discourse and motivated by the notion that such organisations are indicative of more general semiotic principles than those of verbal discourse alone (e.g., van Leeuwen 2005; Liu and O'Halloran 2009); (b) frameworks that extend text structuring accounts from text linguistics, most prominently *rhetorical structure theory* (RST: Mann and Thompson 1988), to the multimodal case (cf. Bateman 2008: 143–176); and (c) frameworks drawing on models inherited from classical rhetoric and persuasion. The latter group is itself rather diverse, ranging from work that adopts rather particular components of rhetoric, such as 'metaphor' (e.g., Forceville 2009) or just the notion of effective communication as such (e.g., Marsh and White 2003), through to more inclusive attempts to apply a fuller set of traditional categories in a multimodal context (cf. Bonsiepe 1999; Kjeldsen 2012; Hoven 2012).
- Multimodal relations can be based on work on *coherence relations* that are more psycholinguistically or cognitively oriented. Such approaches assume that the cognitive mechanisms for attributing coherence across texts and images are similar to those operating within texts. Forceville (2014), for example, proposes the use of Sperber and Wilson's (1995 [1986]) linguistic 'relevance theory' to apply to combinations of material in visual and verbal modes. In general, however, any of the above approaches could also be approached from the perspective of cognition.
- Multimodal relations can be based on *speech acts, interaction and action*: these approaches (see also this volume, chapters 6, 9 and 24) draw on the fact that philosophical proposals for communicative actions, such as those of Grice (1969), actually make few assumptions that would restrict their accounts to verbal acts and so may also be considered applicable to 'multimodal' actions (e.g., Sachs-Hombach 2001; Bucher 2011). These approaches have begun examining concrete cases of multimodal communication, exploring the situated use of different modalities in the service of specific communicative goals. There are also approaches that draw on *social accounts of communication* in general (e.g., Kress 2010).

It should therefore be evident that a considerable diversity of methodological approaches is currently being explored for addressing text-image integration – a more

extensive introduction with examples of most of these is offered in Bateman (2014b). There are, however, also some recurrent themes.

For example, one common challenge arising for all approaches to multimodal documents concerns the complex nature of the analytic units to be considered – that is, in a complex multimodal artefact, just what are the ‘image’ and ‘text’ that are being related? For empirical studies, this is crucial since without clearly demarcated units of analysis, it is less than clear precisely what is being investigated. For further progress, approaches with a firm grasp of the units being recognised, their attributes, their assignment to distinct levels of descriptive analysis, as well as their placement within diverse semiotic systems will be essential. This includes incorporating considerations of layout with fine-grained internal structure (cf. Bateman 2008). Further examples of how this can be combined with analyses in the style of rhetorical structure theory as well as more background information can be found in Hiippala (2012a) and Bateman (2014a).

In addition, tighter descriptions of multimodal artefacts are necessary to formulate more discriminating hypotheses for subsequent empirical exploration. Only then will accounts make sufficiently strong contact with the actual artefacts being analysed as to be able to support empirical research, such as the eye-tracking and other psychological approaches mentioned above. In addition, providing and exploring complex descriptions of larger bodies of data itself raises significant challenges. These now constitute the growing area of *multimodal corpus research* (cf. Bateman 2014c), which employs and extends techniques familiar from linguistic corpus work. Hiippala (2013) and Thomas (2009b) offer some particularly well-developed accounts of how this can be done for static two-dimensional multimodal artefacts.

5 Applications

We have already mentioned the primary applications of research into multimodal integration since they naturally arise out of the main social and cognitive motivations for this direction of research. Applications accordingly revolve around the core concerns of education, particularly in the form of understanding and teaching multiliteracies (Unsworth 2001), of understanding user responses to increasingly complex multimodal documents, and of improving multimodal design and critique of multimodal artefacts. More tightly connecting multimodal theory with multimodal practice *via* empirically-based research should itself also become an increasingly important ‘application’ of theory (Thomas 2009a; Hiippala 2012b). The ability to show how design influences user uptake by using eye-tracking has already been applied, for example, in studies that have demonstrated how readers familiar with newspaper design can completely ‘filter out’ advertisements despite their visual prominence and positioning (Holmqvist et al. 2003). Robust results concerning

how media and their deployment of multimodal resources influence their consumers will increasingly demand appropriate theoretical descriptions of just what the multimodal resources involved are.

There is then hardly an area of information presentation today where issues of modal integration do not arise and where detailed research is required to understand and improve their workings. There are also further cases that lie on the border between the focus of the current chapter, i.e. ‘documents’ as traditionally conceived as more or less self-contained information offerings, and other forms of multimodality. For example, there are now many kinds of environmentally-embedded sources of information that extend multimodality and the task of integration still further – a common example here being ‘signage’, itself increasingly multimodal in design. The effectiveness of signage for orienting users within an environment is now coming into focus not only as a research task, drawing both on traditional information design issues and newer models of cognitive capabilities in spatial organisation and orientation (Hölscher et al. 2007), but also as a very practical concern in providing effective guidance support for diverse user groups, often with varying needs and capabilities. This area itself blends further into that of maps and cartography, particularly when maps are seen as communicative artefacts for orientation and way-finding rather than simple ‘representations’ of physical geography (Meilinger et al. 2007); indeed, maps constitute a classic case of explicit combinations of different kinds of information that require integration on the part of their users, a function that is now extended still further by their common occurrence in information graphics employed within other types of documents.

Considerations of this kind serve well to emphasise that it will be essential to consider the particular meanings being combined when we talk of ‘multimodal integration’ with far more precision than has often been the case if we wish to provide explanatory accounts and practical results. Simple talk of ‘image’ and ‘text’, or of ‘verbal’ and ‘visual’ information, is often far too indiscriminating to produce concrete and applicable explanatory accounts. Semiotically more refined notions of distinct modal contributions of the kind proposed in Bateman (2011) will be required. Indeed, more refined theoretical accounts of the notions of genre, multimodality and their occurrence in diverse media will all be needed for revealing the very diverse range of influences that contribute to each and every instance of multimodal integration.

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Lorenza Mondada

17 Multimodal resources and the organization of social interaction

Abstract: Human communication involves not only language but, crucially, the body – being fundamentally multimodal (that is: involving language, gesture, gaze, body postures, movements, objects manipulations and arrangements of bodies in space). This chapter explores some contemporary issues in this field, elaborating on various challenges this perspectives opens both methodologically and theoretically. The study of language and the body in social interactions is grounded on video recordings of naturally occurring interactions and on transcripts and other forms of annotation. Analytically, this rich documentation makes possible to study the complexity of the moment-by-moment sequential and temporal organization of the emerging interaction. Building on conversation analysis, the chapter shows how multimodality contributes to the study of turn taking, sequence and action.

Keywords: social interaction, multimodality, conversation analysis, language, body, video, sequentiality

1 Introduction

Social interaction, and human communication more generally, mobilizes a range of linguistic and embodied resources through which participants achieve the intelligibility of their actions and build their intersubjective interpretations. Although language is a key means of communication, it is reductive to limit the study of communication to linguistic aspects – given the fundamental contribution of the body to face-to-face interaction. A contemporary challenge consists in developing an integrated conception of language and the body in communicative action – without favouring *a priori* one over the other, but by looking at the way they are specifically and situatedly mobilized together by participants in social interaction. Thus, this chapter explores some ways in which *multimodal resources* comprising different linguistic manifestations (from grammar to prosody) and embodied ones (gesture, gaze, head movements, facial expressions, body postures, body movements, etc.) organize social interaction. The chapter refers to contemporary research on gesture and embodiment and focuses more particularly on the contribution of conversation analysis to this literature and specifically on studies of social interaction based on video recordings of naturally occurring social activities.

In face-to-face interaction, participants not only speak together but also gesticulate and move their bodies in meaningful and coordinated ways. Gesture studies have shown that gestures in conversation are generated by the same processes that produce talk (Kendon 1980; McNeill 1985). Made predominantly by speakers but strongly oriented to their partners (Schegloff 1984), gestures are finely synchronized with the structure of discourse (Müller 1989) and of talk in interaction (Bohle 2001; Kendon 2004); moreover, they are finely tuned with the conduct of the co-participants to whom they are addressed. This has prompted gesture studies to investigate ‘interactive gestures’ (Bavelas et al. 1992) in dialogue – that is, gestures that do not refer to the topics at hand but instead refer to the interlocutor, monitoring shared understanding and establishing common ground (Clark 1996), seeking agreement and also maintaining conversation and regulating turns at talk. These gestures, which typically take the form of either pointing towards the interlocutor or more complex hand shapes such as an exposed palm, an offering open hand, etc., belong to the range of visibly-embodied resources that participants mobilize in order to build the systematic order of social interaction.

Interest in how human interaction works in its ordinary social as well as in its professional and institutional settings has prompted the study of video recordings of naturally occurring activities aimed at understanding how participants smoothly achieve the finely-tuned complex coordination of their actions. On the basis of naturalistic data, conversation analysis, inspired by Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology (1967), has focused on human interaction as *endogenously* and *methodically* organized. Interaction is here considered not as being governed by external norms and rules but as being locally achieved by participants, based on micro-practices that are both context-free and context-shaped (Heritage 1984) – such as practices for self-selecting, for beginning a new turn, for recognizing transition-relevance points (Lerner 2003; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974), for repairing troubles (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977), etc. These practices are organized by participants in a publicly accountable way, that is, in a way, which is intelligibly produced for and interpreted by them as action unfolds in real time. This public accountability is built through the mobilization of a range of resources. These include language and gesture and also integrate other aspects of bodily conduct, such as body postures and movements. The booming literature on multimodal resources (*multimodality* being conceived in this perspective as comprising language, gesture, gaze, head movements, facial expressions, body postures and – increasingly – object manipulation and technology and body movements within space) shows that participants exploit both conventional forms and improvised and occasioned means to produce the intelligibility of their actions and coordinate with the actions of others.

This review begins with a methodological note on the use of video technologies for the study of social interaction (2.). It then develops the notion of *multimodal resources* (3.) and shows how they contribute to the organization of social interaction (4.). The chapter also shows how it is possible to enlarge the classical view of

gesture and the body by taking into consideration the material (5.), spatial (6.) and mobile (7.) dimensions of embodiment. Finally, the chapter offers an exemplary analysis of a piece of data (8.), focusing on analytical and methodological issues raised by practices of pointing and referring in interaction.

2 The naturalistic use of audio and video recording technologies

The detailed consideration of multimodal resources (gestures, gazes, head movements, facial expressions, body postures, manipulations of objects, etc.) depends in a crucial way on the technologies for documenting social action. Even if film potentialities were exploited by social and anthropological research as soon as the first technological devices for creating moving images were available (see Mondada 2012), their systematic exploitation for the study of human communication properly began in the 1950s when technological possibilities began to be used within new paradigms studying social interaction and human communication in naturalistic settings.

In this context, an important role in the use of film for social research was played by an interdisciplinary team at the Veterans Administration Hospital of Palo Alto, lead by Bateson – who had been using films in Bali in collaboration with Mead in the 1940s – using film recordings for the study of communication in psychotherapy and in families with a member affected by schizophrenia. In 1955, this group worked together on the video recording of a psychiatric interview between Bateson and one of his patients, Doris, then transcribed by Hockett, Birdwhistell and McQuown (see McQuown 1971). The title of the project, *Natural History of an Interview*, significantly refers to an analysis of human behaviour that recognizes the importance of ‘spontaneous conversational materials’ in ‘a variety of contexts’ (McQuown 1971, ch. 10: 9, 11). On the basis of this film, Birdwhistell eventually developed his famous analysis of the cigarette scene and the discipline of kinesics (1970). The *Natural History of an Interview* can be seen as inaugurating the contemporary use of video in the social sciences. A few years later, influenced by Schefflen (1972), the founder of context analysis and a member of the Palo Alto group, Kendon (1967, 1970, 1990) gave new vigour to the study of gesture. Some years afterwards, various praxeologically and pragmatically oriented approaches developed more and more sophisticated ways of documenting social practices, and the use of video began to spread in all the social and human sciences, not only in anthropology, where it had been used since its invention, but also in linguistics, sociology, studies of work, technology studies and education.

Conversation analysis developed from the 1960s on, on the basis of audio-video recordings documenting naturally occurring practices. Although a majority of the first studies in conversation analysis used audio recordings and focused on

telephone conversations – a form of interaction in which participants were not relying on their mutual visual access –, the use of video began very early on. As early as 1970, in Philadelphia, Charles and Marjorie Harness Goodwin carried out film recordings of everyday dinner conversations and other social encounters. After 1973, these recordings were used by Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff in research seminars as well as in published papers. In 1975, at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Schegloff presented a paper co-authored with Sacks, who had been killed a few weeks earlier in a car accident, on ‘home position’ (Sacks & Schegloff 2002). This was an early attempt to describe bodily action systematically (see also Schegloff 1984). In 1977, Charles Goodwin presented his dissertation at the Annenberg School of Communications of Philadelphia (later published as Goodwin 1981). The dissertation was based on approximately 50 hours of videotaped conversations in various settings (Goodwin 1981: 33).

Early work by Charles Goodwin (1981) in the USA, as well as by Christian Heath (1986) in the UK, extensively used film materials in order to analyse and understand how, in co-present interaction, humans orderly and situatedly mobilize a large range of verbal, sound and visual resources in order to produce intelligible – *accountable* – actions, as well as to interpret publicly displayed and mutually available actions (Streeck 1993). In an important way, this early work was convergent with some of the assumptions made by pioneers in gesture studies, such as Kendon (1990) and McNeill (1985) who had argued that gesture and talk are not separated ‘modules’ for communication but originate from the very same linguistic, cognitive and social mechanisms as speech.

Further developments in conversation analysis have been characterized by an increasing interest in data gathered in institutional and professional settings, opening up a program of comparative studies of speech exchange systems differing from conversation and characterized by distinctive and restrictive speaker’s rights and obligations (cf. Drew & Heritage 1992: 19; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: 729) as well as by complex activities, workspaces and bodily arrangements of participants (Heath & Luff 2000).

The documentation of such complex situations has implemented new ways of recording data, prompting a reflection on the way in which data are to be collected (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff 2010; Mondada 2006, 2012) in order to document the complexity of embodied action, including not only gestures but also object manipulations, uses of documents, uses of technologies, as well as complex forms of multi-party interaction, beyond mutually focused encounters and within peculiar ecologies and environments – all demanding peculiar techniques of recording and often more than one camera.

3 Multimodal resources

The use of video technologies allows the researcher to conduct a detailed examination of the way in which action gets situatedly organized thanks to the mobilization of a multiplicity of multimodal resources.

The notion of ‘resource’ covers both conventional forms – such as grammar – and less standardized and more opportunistic means that are used by participants to build the intersubjective accountability of their actions. Thus, the notion of ‘resource’ invites the researcher to take into consideration the indexicality of linguistic resources, as well as the systematic and methodic use of embodied resources. This avoids reifying certain well-studied (mostly linguistic) resources and ignoring other less-studied ones or extracting resources from the context in which they are situated. The value and meaning of a resource is context-dependent, being related both to the sequential organization of social interaction and to the situated occasion of its use. In return, a resource also reflexively shapes the particular interpretation of the context that is made relevant at that particular moment. Moreover, the contextually specific use of a resource might also shape its form and intelligibility as a form that will be available in the future – thus prompting semiotic change (Mondada 2014).

Very early on, the very precise temporality of linguistic and gestural resources was described by gesture studies (Seyfeddinipur & Gullberg 2014). For example, speaker’s gestures generally slightly precede their lexical affiliates (Kendon 1980; McNeill 1992; Schegloff 1984). Their peculiar timing is the result of interactive work by which talk and gesture and, more globally, talk and posture are organized in a way that aligns them temporally, for example either by delaying talk to adjust to gesture or the reverse (Condon 1971; Kendon 2004: 135). Co-occurrence of gesture and speech has been widely documented in gesture studies (McNeill 1985), treating talk and gesture as ‘composite signals’ (Clark 1996: 156), as belonging to an ‘integrated message model’ and by showing, for example, that gesture and facial displays are used simultaneously with words, being mobilized together to produce ‘visible acts of meaning’ (Bavelas & Chovil 2000) or ‘visible action as utterance’ (Kendon 2004). However, despite these studies, the way in which multimodal resources as a whole (meaning a wider range of embodied resources than gesture only) are mobilized within multiple temporal and sequential relationships in situated interactions remains to be systematically investigated by focusing not only on the speaker but also on the actions of the addressees and on the entire participation framework (Goodwin 1981, 2000, 2007a).

This enlarged approach to multimodality – considered as the integrated study of all the relevant linguistic, embodied and material resources participants exploit for organizing social interaction in an audible-visible intelligible way – has been developed more particularly by work in conversation analysis (Mondada 2014).

On the one hand, this has prompted systematic investigations focused on a particular multimodal detail; for example, Schegloff (1984) studies gestures produced by speakers, Goodwin (1981) divergent vs. mutual gaze prompting re-starts at the beginning of the turn, Mondada (2007b) pointing as displaying an imminent speaker's self-selection; Stivers (2008) nods as expressing affiliation in storytelling and Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2006) facial expressions as manifesting alignment and affiliation in assessment sequences.

On the other hand, a complementary approach considers the coherent and coordinated complexity of various embodied conducts together; for example, Heath (1989) studies together gaze, body posture and body manipulations; Streeck (1993) gesture and gaze and Mondada and Schmitt (2010) and Hausendorf, Mondada and Schmitt (2012) the coordination of a range of multimodal resources, going from gesture to body position and considering the distribution of bodies in space. This emphasis on complex *multimodal gestalts* also invites researchers to investigate the entire body and its adjustments to other bodies in their environment, taking into account object manipulations and body movements within the environment (Goodwin 2000). Recently, the consideration of mobility in interaction, comprising walking, driving and flying, has insisted on the importance of considering the entire body (Haddington, Mondada & Neville 2013). What emerges from these studies is the necessity to go beyond the study of single 'modalities' coordinated with talk and to take into consideration the broader embodied and environmentally situated organization of activities (Goodwin 2012; Streeck, Goodwin & LeBaron 2011).

4 The multimodal organization of turns, sequences and actions

The study of multimodality in conversation analysis elaborates on and contributes to the general literature about language and embodiment in social practices; it is also based on a specific analytic perspective, which puts in the foreground the ideas of action, temporality and indexicality. This praxeological conception of language and the body in interaction has developed into studies about how turns, sequences and actions are formatted and implemented thanks to multimodal resources.

Conversation analysis deals with the *methodic* way in which participants organize social interaction. This use of the notion of 'method' comes from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), and refers to the fact that participants build the intelligibility of their action in an orderly (that is, 'methodic') and publicly recognizable way (that is, 'accountable'), which is both systematic and indexical, both transcending context and taking into account the diversity of contexts (both *context-free* and *context-shaped*, Heritage 1984). As a starting observation, Sacks, Schegloff

and Jefferson (1974) demonstrated that participants interact by smoothly alternating turns at talk, minimizing both pauses and overlaps. This prompted a general interest in the methodic practices and resources through which this coordination happens in a finely tuned manner. Since the very first studies, a range of resources has been explored – concerning first linguistic resources, such as syntax, prosody and meaning, but then also embodied resources, such as gesture, gaze, head movements, nods, facial expressions and body postures.

Conversation analysis focuses on interactional order as it is achieved by participants at all levels of sequential organization. Participants engage step by step in the construction of their turns, which are formatted online, in an emergent way, taking into consideration the responses of co-participants (Goodwin 1979) and the contingencies of the interactional context. Turns unfold in a systematic way based on the projections and the normative expectations characterizing the organization of a sequence, first within the fundamental structure of the adjacency pair, constituted by a first pair part making relevant and expectable a second pair part, as in a question/answer sequence (Schegloff & Sacks 1973), and second within possible pre-sequences and post-expansions which complexify it (Schegloff 2007). Participants mobilize all the resources at hand for the intelligible, mutually accountable organization of the sequentiality of interaction; consequently, all the levels of sequential analysis have been explored as they are formatted and implemented not only by talk but also by a range of embodied resources.

Turn construction and turn-taking basically rely on multimodal resources for the organization of recognizable unit completions as well as transition-relevance places (Lerner 2003). Speakers can display their imminent self-selection by a range of multimodal resources used as ‘turn-entry devices’ – going from the ‘[a]-face’, displaying that the speaker is about talk, to the palm-up gesture (Streeck & Hartge 1992) and from the pointing gesture (Mondada 2007b) to other complex embodied manifestations (Schmitt 2005) – projecting that they are about to speak. Speakers also multimodally display the completion of turn-constructive units (TCUs) as well as turns by projecting completion thanks to the trajectory of gesture or its retraction (Mondada 2007b, 2015) used as ‘turn-exit devices’. More generally, Schegloff (1984: 267) suggests that the pre-positioning of gesture is a way of creating a ‘projection space’ within an on-going utterance. Turns can also be expanded, not only by adding syntactically fitted materials but also with gesture (Goodwin 1979, 1981) – for example, with gesture achieving the collaborative construction of turns, which is similar to the collaborative construction of utterances (Bolden 2003; Hayashi 2005; Iwasaki 2009).

Not only turn construction but also sequence organization rely on multimodal resources as demonstrated by studies on assessments (Goodwin & Goodwin 1987; Lindström & Mondada 2009), word searches (Goodwin & Goodwin 1986; Hayashi 2005), repair (de Fornel 1990–91; Greiffenagen & Watson 2007) – to give just a few examples.

Opening and closing sequences, as well as transition sequences from one activity to another, are typically organized in an embodied way. The opening of an interaction is achieved not only by the first words spoken or by the response to a summons, but, even before participants begin to speak, by an adjustment and arrangement of their bodies in the material environment in such a way that an 'F-formation' (Kendon 1990) adequate for the imminent activity is constituted. This in turn prompts the participants to progressively organize and assemble their bodies within the local environment, building the relevant 'interactional space' of the encounter (Hausendorf, Mondada & Schmitt 2012; Mondada, 2007a, 2009). They can even be engaged in different courses of action – or in multi-activity – as displayed for example by 'body-torqued' postures (Schegloff 1998) in which the upper part of the body is oriented towards a particular participation framework and the lower part to other relevant features. On the other hand, towards the closing of an encounter, the interactional space dissolves (De Stefani 2010; Robinson 2001). The importance of bodily movements in transitions between one episode of an interaction and another, often concomitant with the manipulation of objects and artefacts, also displays the embodied orientation of participants towards the organization of the interaction (Heath 1986; Modaff 2003; Mondada 2015).

5 Materiality: objects, documents, technologies

Gestures are not meaningful *per se* in isolation but only in context and more precisely are 'environmentally coupled' (Goodwin 2007b). For instance, Goodwin (2009) shows that in order to analyse the turn, 'She sold me this. But she didn't sell me this (0.2) or tha:t', one has to take into account 'the integrated use of language, the body and objects in the world' (107). Actually, the speaker of this utterance is holding a jar in his hand, which has been bought on the Internet. The missing part of the object is made visible by rotating the hand at the bottom of the jar, and the words are made meaningful by the articulation among talk, gesture and the object. As Goodwin notes, gestures coupled to phenomena in the environment are pervasive in many settings. Even more radically, LeBaron and Streeck (2000) consider that 'hands-on interactions with things' and tactile manipulations of objects constitute the experiential grounding of more abstract and symbolic conversational gesture; symbols embody experiences that have emerged in situated action (136) and 'hands learn how to handle things before they learn how to gesticulate' (137; see Streeck 2009).

Besides ordinary objects, video analyses in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have paid special attention to particular artifacts such as texts and visualizations, which are both types of objects that can be handled, grasped and manipulated with the hands, and semiotic objects that can be read. In medical

settings, the way doctors turn to such objects during consultation (DiMatteo et al. 2003; Heath 1986; Robinson 1998) or produce texts and files (Heath & Luff 1996) has been documented. Likewise, the reflexive constitution of artifacts and inscriptions by the way in which they are locally mobilized within work activities (Mondada 2006; Suchman 2000) and during scientific activities (Ochs, Gonzales & Jacoby 1996; Roth & Lawless 2002) has been studied. Goodwin's study of the use of the Munsell chart by archaeologists (1999) details this complex web of multimodal resources in an exemplary way. He studies archaeologists excavating soil and examining its colour by holding a coding form to be filled with soil description and a Munsell chart allowing the comparison between different shades of colour. The mobilization of the chart is done in an ordered way, aligned with other movements such as body arrangements, participants' gaze orientations, their pointing gestures, the holding of a trowel, as well as with talk – all these resources making it possible to compare the colours of the Munsell chart with the colour of the soil sample. 'Seeing' colour with the Munsell chart is not the automatic result of a procedure; rather, it is a situated achievement needing the prior alignment of the local action space and, thus, requiring time.

Other forms of materialities have been studied in relation to social interactions in environments in which technological tools are used, manipulated and gazed at. Workplace studies have shown the pervasive configuring role of materiality and artifacts in professional activities such as in airport control rooms (Goodwin & Goodwin 1996: 62; Suchman 1993), underground stations (Heath & Luff 2000), surgical theatres (Koschmann et al. 2007, Mondada 2003, 2011b), television studios (Broth 2008, 2009), emergency call and call centres (Fele 2008; Mondada 2008; Whalen 1995; Whalen & Zimmerman 1987), pilot's cockpits (Nevile 2004), etc.

In summary, attention to objects permits a detailed investigation not only of the manual actions of the hands but also of involvements of the entire body, as well as of the way in which those actions are anchored within the spatial environment.

6 Spatiality: the establishment and transformation of interactional spaces

The focus on bodies and objects entails a renewed interest in the environment and in the way in which embodied conducts adapt, exploit and transform the features of the material surroundings of an action. In this sense, space refers not just to the pre-existing environment but also to a configuration created by the embodied disposition, orientation and arrangement of the participants within an interaction.

Early on, Goffman (1963, 1964) showed that body arrangements in space create temporary territories with changing boundaries. These territories are recognized by participants involved in an encounter and also by bystanders. Body positions de-

limit a temporary ‘ecological huddle’ (Goffman 1964), which materializes the ‘situated activity system’. These arrangements constitute what Goffman (1963) calls ‘focused gatherings’, which are defined by mutual orientation and shared attention, as displayed by body positions, postures, gazes and addressed gestures. This interest in temporary and labile territories and in their effectiveness is shared by Scheflen (1972). On the basis of encounters video-taped in private and public settings, he describes how a group talking together draws a claimed territory, which is observed and respected by others outside the circle. Kendon (1977, 1990) conceptualizes this territory by using the notion of ‘F-formation’, referring to how different body positions and orientations build an arrangement favouring a common focus of attention and engagement in a joint activity.

In his work, Goodwin (2000, 2003, 2007b) insists on the mutual relationship between embodied actions and the material environment, defining what he calls a ‘contextual configuration’. If the analysis of talk has to take into consideration the embodied actions of participants, the study of gesture or body posture cannot be developed in isolation but has to describe the way in which the structure of an environment contributes to the organization of an interaction.

Drawing on these inspirations, Mondada (2007a, 2009, 2011a) proposes that ‘interactional space’ is constituted through the situated, mutually adjusted and changing arrangements of participants’ bodies within space. This produces a configuration relevant to the activity they are engaged in, their mutual attention and their common focus of attention, the objects they manipulate and the way in which they coordinate in joint action. This interactional space is constantly being established and transformed within an activity (De Stefani 2011; Hausendorf, Mondada & Schmitt 2012; LeBaron & Streeck 1997; Mondada 2009, 2011a). The dynamic transformation of interactional space is achieved by the bodily arrangements of participants constituting mobile configurations and mobile formations. This is even more the case with interactional spaces constituted through and within mobile activities such as walking, driving, biking, etc. Mobility further enlarges and dynamizes the vision of space in interaction.

7 Mobility: bodies in movement

The focus on space has also prompted observations about how the entire body is put in motion in social interaction. Traditionally, much research has predominantly focused on interactions in static settings or within a local site, and less attention has been paid to interactions occurring in a mobile situation, either with bodies in motion, as in walking, or with participants moving in a car (Haddington, Keisanen & Nevile 2012) or even in an airplane (Nevile 2004).

Walking in interaction is an interesting case of mobility because it involves the entire body and the complex bodily arrangements of dynamic interactional spaces.

Early work on walking already describes ‘doing walking’ as a methodic practice and a concerted accomplishment (Ryave & Schenkein 1974: 265). Members achieve walking together, being recognized both as a ‘vehicular unit’ (Goffman 1971: 8) and as ‘withs’ (Goffman 1971: 19). In walking together, participants organize their concerted action both within a group – by maintaining proximity and pace, speeding up and slowing down, managing turns and stopping together (see De Stefani 2011; Haddington, Mondada & Neville 2013) – and with respect to other passers-by, – while navigating within a crowd, avoiding collisions and adjusting to the trajectory of others and even while making accountable the interruption of their trajectory (Watson 2005). Two mobile units can also converge, for example when various ‘withs’ meet and merge, thereby constituting one unique interactional space (Mondada 2009). Conversely, people can also display that they are *not* with, exhibiting civil inattention and minimizing the effects of co-presence (Goffman 1971; Sudnow 1972). As noted by Ryave and Schenkein (1974), the fact that these challenges are resolved in unproblematic ways reveals ‘the nature of the work executed routinely by participant walkers’ (267).

Moreover, collective walking activities are organized by being oriented in a finely-tuned way to the organization of talk and even to the details of the emergent construction of turns and sequences; Relieu (1999) shows how turn-design is sensitive to the spatial ecology encountered by speakers talking and walking, and Mondada (2009) shows how the first turn of an encounter is finely designed with respect to the walking body of the co-participant. Mobile practices such as walking away (Broth & Mondada 2013) or running away (Depperman, Schmitt & Mondada 2010) orient to transition-relevance points and to transitions from one activity to the other; additionally, they contribute to the achievement of these transitions and to their accountability in a publicly visible way to which all co-participants can align – or eventually disalign.

8 An empirical case: the multimodal organization of reference

In order to discuss empirical issues related to the dynamic establishment of multimodal gestalts (Mondada 2015), we turn now to an example, which shows how a participant introduces a new referent in his talk while the other co-participants are still focused on a previous object. The fragment is extracted from a guided visit lead by a gardener, LUC, who describes and explains the rich fauna and flora of a famous garden to YAN, ELIse, and JEAn. Such a context and activity involves in a crucial way a) the gesture of the main participant pointing around him, b) his talk, c) the mobility of the participants who are walking along the footpath, d) their distribution and mutual positioning designing a dynamic interactional space and

e) their gaze and joint attention since they are bodily and visually oriented towards the rich details of the material environment.

We join the fragment as Luc begins to point to a dead branch where woodpeckers have produced visible scars – while the other participants are still looking at the previous object pointed at, a tree supported by a stick.

The excerpt has been video recorded by a mobile camera held by a person walking backwards along the footpath as the group walks forwards.

The fragment is transcribed both for verbal actions (numbered lines, followed by a translation, preceded by the identification of the speaker in capitals) and embodied actions (in the next line, with the identification of the participants in small letters). Embodied actions are synchronized with talk by a series of symbolic landmarks (one per participant), permitting the reader to reconstruct the simultaneous and successive temporality of the multimodal resources.

Extract 1 (3/15.25 piverts)

```

1  JEA  alors celui-là il est assisté, hein?
      so this one is assisted, isn't it?
   jea  >>walks on the path-->
   yan  >>looks at the tree with crutches-->
   eli  >>looks at JEA-->
   luc  >>leaves the path and goes tow another tree-->
2  ELI  ouais:=
      yeah:
3  LUC  =oui, # mais r'gardez, *r'gardez [l*es:
      =yes, but look, look [(at) the:
4  ELI  [( ) quand même
      [( ) nonetheless
      *.....*points-->>
   luc
   fig          #fig.1

```



```

5  LUC  r'gardez les pi[ve:rtts,* #
      look at the green woodpeckers,
6  YAN  [(c'est un *cé+ri#sier?)
      [(is that a cherry tree?)
   luc  --->*stops, still pointing, turns to group->
   eli  --->+looks at Luc-->>
   yan  -->+looks Luc and stops-->>
   jea  #looks at Luc, still walking->
   fig  #fig.2

```



- 7 (0.2)
 8 LUC r'gardez les pi*verts.
 look at the green woodpeckers
 jea -->#looks and stops-->>
 9 (0.2)
 10 YAN ah [oui
 oh [yes
 11 LUC [ça aussi, on imaginerait pas qu'y a des pi[verts ici,
 [this too, we would not imagine to have woo[dpeckers here,
 12 ELI [oui
 [yes

While Jean is still commenting about the supported tree (1) and Elise is responding to him (2), Luc leaves the footpath and approaches another tree, directing his body towards it and beginning to point at it. He initiates the next action, focusing on the next object to be looked at and described, but his co-participants are still engaged with the previous object, looking away (Jean walks forward on the path, Elise looks at him and Yan looks at the tree – see Figure 1). Both the transcription and the screen shot make available a rich array of multimodal details showing diverging orientations of the participants.

The practical problem with which Luc is confronted is how, in this circumstance, to point and show them the detail he is beginning to refer to. The practical solution he finds consists of both delaying the progressivity of his talk and of establishing the joint attention of the participants before continuing with his description.

We can notice that, in line 3, Luc begins his turn with 'oui, mais'/'yes, but'; he both treats what Jean has just said (1) and operates a disjunction with it, introducing an alternative action. Moreover, he first utters the verb 'r'gardez'/'look' alone, then the same verb with a definite article, which projects a name but is *not* followed by it. The unfinished sentence is overlapped by Elise who is still orienting to Jean's comment. Jean repeats the verb again (5), followed this time by the article and the noun – referring to the object he is introducing (actually invisible but represented by the scars left by the woodpeckers on the pointed at branch).

During this new re-start of Luc's turn, different embodied conducts are deployed by the participants; Luc has reached the tree and stops pointing, turning to the co-participants; the co-participants now look at him, Elise being already reori-

ented towards him while Jean and Yan still walk on the footpath. Yan has just asked a question about the previous tree and turns to Luc as the expert person able to respond; he sees Jean pointing at the tree and reorients his gaze at the pointed at place.

In line 8, Luc repeats the entire utterance. Contrary to line 5, which was very expressive, the utterance is produced with a flat voice; the utterance was attracting the gaze of the co-participants line 5, working as an attention-getting device, whereas line 8 it introduces the referent to be seen. This turn is now responded to not only by the establishment of a new interactional space around him (Figure 2), but also by a change-of-state token produced by Yan (10). At that point, Luc continues predicating something about the woodpeckers and goes on with a story about them (11 ff.). Elise produces an acknowledgement too (12).

This excerpt shows how a multiplicity of embodied resources are mobilized to achieve the introduction of the new focus of attention; on the side of the speaker, an array of linguistic resources are used. These include the verb 'to look' in the imperative, the projective power of the article, the delay of the noun, the pointing gesture and the entire body not only approaching the object but also leaning towards it, as a kind of bodily pointer, not to forget the gaze monitoring the action of the co-participants. On the side of the co-participants, an emerging responsive action occurs in form of a change of direction of the gaze a reorientation of the bodies stopping to walk and turning to the object, together with a verbal response acknowledging what Luc is doing. Only when this complex web of multimodal transformations has been achieved can Luc continue with the progressivity of his talk.

This example confirms previous work on the embodied conditions of the use of deictics (Goodwin 2003; Hindmarsh & Heath 2000; Mondada 2007a). Prior to the use of referential expressions, a speaker engages in intensive interactional work in order not only to get the relevant attention of co-participants but also to (re)arrange their entire bodies in such a way that a deictic action (achieved through linguistic and gestural resources) lies within the focus of attention of the participants. As Goodwin (2003) shows, pointing and talking are formatted together by taking into consideration the surrounding space, the activity in which the participants are engaged and the participants' mutual orientation. In the study using the example of archaeologists excavating soil, Goodwin (2000) shows how participants actively constitute a visual field that has to be scrutinized, parsed and understood together by the co-participants in order to find out where the speaker is pointing. The archaeologists juxtapose language, gesture, tools (such as trowels) and graphic fields (such as maps) on a domain of scrutiny, which is surrounding them but is also being delimited by the very act of referring to it. In this sense, gestures are environmentally coupled (Goodwin 2007b) and not used as a separated resource coming from the exterior world into a pre-existing context; the domain of scrutiny is transformed and reorganized by the very action of pointing done within the current task.

As Hindmarsh and Heath (2000) show, these gestures and body movements and amplifying them are realized in a way that is recipient-designed, that is, participants indicate and even display referents for co-participants at the relevant moment when an object is visible to them. Pointing gestures are ‘produced and timed with respect of the activities of the co-participants, such that they are in a position to be able to see the pointing gesture in the course of its production’ (Hindmarsh and Heath 2000: 1868). Thus, the organization of the gesture and the body of a speaker is adjusted to the recipient in order to guide him or her in the material environment towards the referent. Since recipients display their understanding and grasp of an action going on, speakers adjust to the production of these expressions or to their absence or delay.

This mutual orientation involves not only talk and gesture but also the entire body, gazing on and bending towards the object and, more radically, actively rearranging the surrounding environment. Mondada (2007a) shows how speakers, prior to the production of a deictic, dispose their bodies within space, reposition objects within space and even restructure the environment. The deictic and the pointing gesture are produced only *after* participants have organized the disposition of their spatial context. Thus, deictic words and gestures are not merely adapting to a pre-existing and immutable context; they are part of an action that actively renews and changes the context, rearranging the interactional space in the most appropriate way for the pointing gesture to take place. In these cases, the emergent and progressive temporality of talk and action is suspended, delayed or postponed until the conditions for joint attention or a common focus of attention are fulfilled.

The emergent organization of talk and action concerns not only gesture and gaze but also the moving body, the surrounding space and the material environment. What emerges from these contributions is the necessity to go beyond the study of single ‘modalities’ coordinated with talk and to take into consideration the broader embodied and environmentally situated organization of activities (Streeck, Goodwin & LeBaron 2011).

9 Conclusion: challenges

Multimodal interaction opens up an extremely rich field of investigation, expanding prior knowledge about social interaction. A wider notion of the multimodal resources mobilized by participants for building their accountable actions includes language, gesture, gaze, facial expression, body posture, body movement, such as walking, and embodied manipulation of artifacts. This enlarged vision opens up various challenges, both methodological and theoretical.

Methodologically, the study of relevant details concerning the entire body challenges the way in which social action is documented, first through video recordings of naturally occurring interactions in their ordinary social settings and second

through transcripts and other forms of annotation. The documentation of participants engaged in mobile activities within complex settings, involving not only their bodies but also various material and spatial environmental details, requires video recordings and video technologies that are relevantly adjusted to the activities observed. The representation of complex conduct involving a variety of multimodal resources also challenges traditional, more linear, transcripts and requires more and more sophisticated annotation and alignment tools (like ELAN, ANVIL or CLAN).

Analytically, this rich documentation shows the complexity of the reconstruction of the moment-by-moment temporality of an emerging interaction. Multimodality is characterized by multiple temporalities, both simultaneous and successive, and by multiple sequentialities operating at the same time. More broadly, complex multimodal gestalts require a study of the social organization of language and embodied conducts by taking into consideration both their systematicity and the specificity of their ecology – as well as participants' orientation towards these multiple details unfolding in real time.

Transcript conventions

Talk has been transcribed according to conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004).

An indicative translation is provided line per line, in italics. It aims at making the original understandable for the reader.

Multimodal details have been transcribed according to the following conventions (see Mondada 2007b https://franz.unibas.ch/fileadmin/franz/user_upload/redaktion/Mondada_conv_multimodality.pdf):

* *	delimit descriptions of one speaker's actions.
+ +	delimit descriptions of another speaker's actions.
*--->	action described continues across subsequent lines.
*--->>	action described continues until and after excerpt's end.
---->*	action described continues until the same symbol is reached.
>>--	action described begins before the excerpt's beginning.
....	action's preparation.
.....	action's retraction.
luc	participant doing the action is identified in small characters.
fig	figure; screen shot.
#	indicates the exact moment at which the screen shot has been recorded.

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V. Verbal communication across media and contexts

Daniel Perrin

18 Media Discourse

Abstract: This chapter offers an overview of trends in research on discourse in the broadcast and print media, with a special focus on news media discourse and newswriting in particular. Drawing on a case study of newswriting (henceforth *Leba* case) at Swiss national television, it first outlines an interdisciplinary approach to media discourse at the intersection of individual and social language use (Part 1). Second, it explains social and cognitive perspectives onto media discourse in general and newswriting in particular (2). Third, it provides exemplary insights into four types of research methods for the analysis of media discourse, especially in the field of newswriting (3). Finally, it discusses the value that multi-perspective approaches can add to both theory and practice of media discourse (4).¹

Keywords: media, broadcast media, print media, newswriting

1 Case study: An interdisciplinary approach to newswriting

In this section, I first outline an interdisciplinary approach to media discourse that combines perspectives from journalism studies and media linguistics (Part 1.1). Second, I introduce the practical examples (1.2) that I will use throughout the article to explain concepts such as recontextualization (1.3) and emergence (1.4) – key concepts at the interface of social and cognitive language use in media discourse.

1.1 Combining perspectives from journalism studies and media linguistics

Both journalism studies and media linguistics deal with public discourse: first, with the production and reception of communicational offers; second, with the products themselves; and third, with the setting that this communication influen-

¹ This article draws on existing publications by the author. Paragraphs and formulations have been reproduced from the following papers without explicit cross-references: Perrin, Daniel (2013). *The linguistics of newswriting*. Amsterdam, New York et al.: John Benjamins. | Perrin, Daniel & Grésillon, Almuth (2013). *Methodology. From speaking about writing to tracking text production*. In Daniel Perrin & Eva-Maria Jakobs (Eds.), *Handbook of writing and text production* (Vol. 10). New York et al.: De Gruyter.

ces and is influenced by. Interdisciplinary cooperation is a logical consequence (Figure 1):

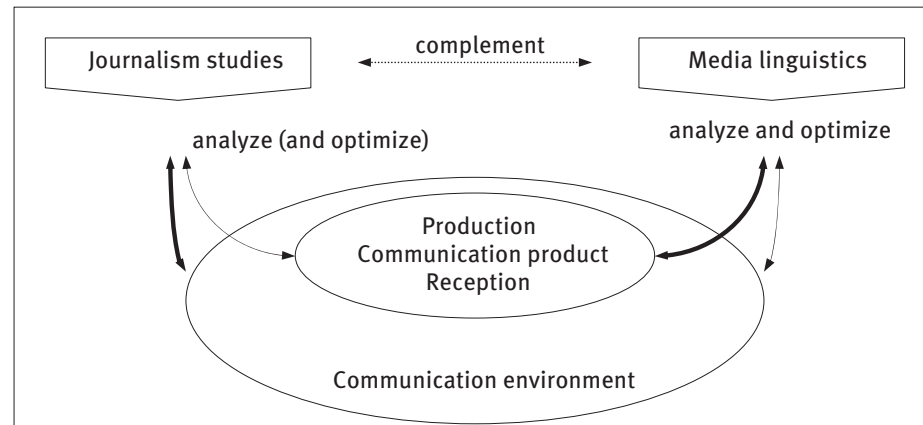


Fig. 1: Interdisciplinary cooperation of media linguistics with journalism studies.

By doing so, the two disciplines complement each other in their epistemological interests and methods: journalism studies in the tradition of communication studies (e.g., Roe 2003; but see Richardson 2008) primarily seek to establish the general validity of its findings with statistical probability. This entails broad surveys with little effort applied to the individual cases. Media linguistics, on the other hand, often seeks to discover regularities in language-based constructions of meaning even in individual cases in a detailed, precise, and conclusive manner. It then argues for the significance of its findings in terms of relevance and plausibility, as opposed to statistics. For systematic generalization, such approaches often include procedures from the research tradition of grounded theory (e.g., Charmaz 2008; Glaser & Holton 2004).

With an interdisciplinary approach, journalism studies and media linguistics can, for example, do broad-based research into how political demonstrations in the Middle East generally are framed in media discourse. On the other hand, a few deep insights into newswriting processes can provide evidence that experienced journalists are able to abandon stereotypes, for example by working carefully with linguistic means and by re-contextualizing pictures in a different way from their colleagues. This is what the journalist in *Leba* case does, as could be shown in the *Idée suisse* research project of which this case study is part. In the next paragraphs, I outline the case and the entire research project; throughout the chapter then, I use them to illustrate some of the theoretical concepts and approaches to media discourse, such as the recontextualization and emergence.

1.2 *Leba* and *Idée suisse* as practical examples

Public service broadcasting companies are among the most important broadcasting companies in Europe. The Swiss public broadcaster, SRG SSR, has the highest ratings in the country. As a public service institution, SRG has a federal, societal, cultural, and linguistic mandate to fulfill: promote social integration by promoting public understanding (Swiss Confederation, 2006). As a media enterprise, though, SRG is subject to market and competitive forces. Losing audience would mean losing public importance and legitimacy for public funding. The *Idée suisse* research project investigated how those working for the broadcaster deal with these two key expectations they experience as basically contradictory.

Epistemologically, the researchers aimed at reconstructing *Promoting public understanding* as the interplay of situated linguistic activity and social structures. The research question and the theoretical approach led to four project modules, focusing on media policy (module A), media management (B), media production (C), and media reflection (D). The result of this procedure was a detailed insight into stakeholders' conflicting expectations and stances. Media policy expects public media to promote public understanding through their communicational offers, whereas media management considers implementing the mandate as infeasible or irrelevant in the face of market pressures. Grounded in these data, the mid-range theory of *Promoting public understanding* was developed (Perrin 2013: 8).

A key inference from this theory is that, for the case of SRG SSR, if solutions of bringing together public and market demands cannot be revealed in the management suites of the organization, they have to be looked for in the newsrooms. This meant a focus on journalistic practices in the second phase of the project. In module D (i.e. journalists' metadiscourse) verbal data were analyzed, just as in modules A and B. Module C (i.e. journalists' media production) however, focused on observable text production activity. 120 newswriting processes were analyzed and contextualized with knowledge about: explicit editorial norms of text production; writers' individual and organizational situations; and writers' individual and shared language awareness. One example of this linguistic newsroom ethnography is the *Leba* case.

The *Leba* case concerns the issue of ethnic and religious diversity as well as expansion plans of neighboring countries repeatedly threatening national unity in Lebanon. In 2005, the Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, was killed in a bomb attack, and on February 14, 2007, the second anniversary of the assassination was commemorated with a national demonstration in Beirut. *Télévision Suisse Romande* started covering the topic in the noon issue of *Téléjournal*. While European media often report on politically motivated violence in Lebanon, the journalist R. G. highlighted peaceful aspects of the demonstrations in his news item. The *Leba* case illustrates the mediallyinguistic key concept of recontextualization (Part 1.2). Also and more importantly, it documents the emergence and implementation of the idea to change one particular word and use it as a leitmotif (1.3).

1.3 Focus on recontextualization

A first detail from the *Leba* case that matters for the present chapter is the intertextual chain the journalist R. G. draws on. In his new item, R. G. integrates quotes, utterances from protesters in Lebanon, which are recorded by a video journalist (VJ) and then selected and modified by, first, a Lebanese television station; second, a global news agency; third, *Téléjournal*, a station of Swiss national TV SRG SSR (Figure 2). Step by step, the utterance is recontextualized, shifted from one context to another. In this process, the semiotic means the protester used to express her stance is repeatedly reconstructed and thus nested in textual and communicative environments. These environments are influenced by agents and their stance(s) throughout the media system (Perrin 2012).

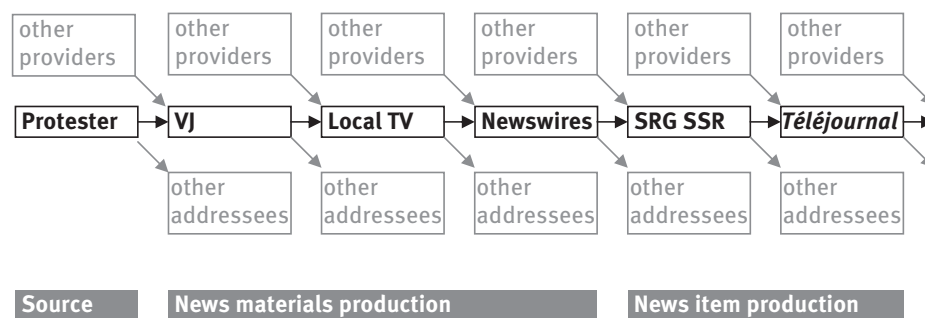


Fig. 2: The intertextual chain from a protester's comment to the quote in a *Téléjournal* news item.

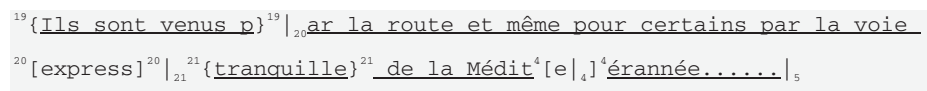
1.4 Focus on emergence

A second relevant detail from the *Leba* case is the emergence of a leitmotif during newswriting. At the 9:30 morning conference of the *Téléjournal* newsroom team on February 14, 2007, R. G. received the assignment to prepare an item about demonstrations in Lebanon for the noon edition of the *Téléjournal*. He found the deadline tight, which helped make him concentrate on the main topic: tens of thousands of demonstrators from all over Lebanon streaming into Beirut on the second anniversary of the killing of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. They were protesting against the possibility of renewed civil war that would partition their country among neighboring countries and, above all, Syria's influence. So far there had been no violence.

In an early phase in the writing process, R. G. wrote the voiceover for an introductory scene. The scene shows how people traveled en masse to the demonstration by boat. Finding these boats in the video material surprised him, he says. In his very first sentence, R. G. refers to another fact new to him: as he just learns

from the news service, the Lebanese had that day off. So the beginning of the product was shaped by details that were new to the experienced journalist. He then took a closer look at the pictures that were new to him and made a revision of a word that turned out to be the pivot point of the whole writing process.

In the first sentence of the second paragraph, R. G. had first talked about an expressway to describe the direct route over the Mediterranean sea, “la voie express de la méditerranée”. While interweaving the text with the images, R. G. realized that a tranquil path, “la voie tranquille”, would better fit the slow journey of a boat. So he deleted “express” and inserted “tranquille” instead. A notational system for writing processes, called S-notation (e.g., Severinson-Eklundh & Kollberg 1996), represents these changes by indicating deletions in [square brackets] and insertions in {curly braces} (Figure 3).



¹⁹{Ils sont venus p}¹⁹ |₂₀ ar la route et même pour certains par la voie
²⁰[express]²⁰ |₂₁ ²¹{tranquille}²¹ de la Médit⁴[e]⁴ é rannée..... |₅

Fig. 3: Revisions from the *Leba* case. Source: tsr_tj_070214_1245_guillet_libanon_snt.

With “tranquille” R. G. found the leitmotif of his item. In the retrospective verbal protocol recorded after the writing process, R. G. says that he loves the adjective because it corresponds not only to the image of the boats but also to the tranquility of the demonstration. He expects the “tranquil” to resonate in the minds of the audience. Just as consciously, he talks about using the term “drapeau libanais”, the Lebanese flag, as a symbol of the demonstrators’ desire for political independence.

In sum, R. G. overcame the critical situation of using brash stereotypes when under time pressure. Instead of catering to the market and resorting to predictable images that could overshadow publicly relevant developments, he absorbed his source material, listened to what was being said, and discerned what was important in the pictures. By doing so, he was able to discover a gentle approach to the topic that allowed him to produce a coherent and fresh story and at the same time managed to reflect the political finesse required by his TV station’s mandate of promoting public understanding. By changing one word, he initiated fundamental changes to his contribution to media discourse.

2 Theory: Social and cognitive aspects of media discourse

Media discourse as a formal object of study differs from discipline to discipline, and approach to approach. Depending on epistemological interests, it has been

conceptualized, for example, as mental processing (Part 2.1), language use (2.2), writing at work (2.3), and journalistic communication (2.4). Taken together, such perspectives point at a gap to be closed by integral analyses of specific activities within media discourse, such as newswriting (2.5).

2.1 Media discourse as mental processing

At the mental interface, communicative activities such as writing and reading or speaking and listening interact with thinking and feeling, as referred to in concepts such as *cognition*, *affect*, *emotion*, *motivation*, *involvement*, *interest*, *attitude*, and *stance*. These concepts partly overlap in their use, both in research in general and in research into media discourse. In any case, they refer to mental states and activities that have long been considered as being located within human bodies. As internal states and activities, they are not directly accessible for research.

However, due to ecological interconnection, internal processing is densely coupled with external processing, such as “the creation and manipulation of written vehicles” (Menary 2007: 622), which both influences and is influenced by mental processes. It is this deep interconnection that allows researchers to both access mental activity through writing, e.g., in media discourse, and elaborate their knowledge about mental contributions to media discourse through theorizing mental activity. Key approaches of research into cognitive and affective mental activities include:

- Writing is evoked and structured by thoughts – but it also evokes and restructures thoughts. Having long been considered a form and substitute of speech and a tool for fixing (mnemotechnical function) and trading knowledge (communicative function), writing was recognized as “an active and powerful cultural agency in its own right” (Harris 1989, 99) in the 1970s (e.g., McLuhan 1964). The power that literacy adds to language in societies is far more than accumulation and communication of knowledge. Literacy allows for epistemic writing, thinking with writing tools (Ortner 2000) on both individual and social levels. It allows for enhanced, “chirographic” (Molitor-Lübbert 2002: 46) thinking in interaction with an emerging text – and it fosters shared interactive knowledge building (e.g., Goody 2001; Menary 2007).
- Not only is writing influenced by affective and emotional states, it also influences writers’ feelings. Whereas researchers still debate about “[h]ow to define emotions scientifically” (Scarantino 2012: 358; see also Dixon 2012 or Izard 2010), research has long explained writing as an “affective experience” (Brand 1989). One of the early investigations shows that emotions from former writing processes are brought into a new writing project like a mortgage, influencing writers’ confidence and motivation throughout the process: “Emotions are involved in mobilizing for writing and sustaining it” (Brand & Powell 1986). Such insights led and still lead to numerous educational studies of “developing mo-

tivation to write” (Bruning & Horn 2000: 25, see also, e.g., Hidi & Boscolo 2006: 2006; Fartoukh, Chanquoy & Piolat 2012).

Case studies such as *Leba* offer in-depth insights into the role of emotions in the collaborative production of multimodal contributions to media discourse. To explore how professionals feel about their writing and, in particular, how their feelings about it develop in situ is bound to provide new, deeper insights into critical situations of communicating verbally.

2.2 Media discourse as language use

In the semiotic understanding of the term, even animals and computers communicate with languages. Linguistics, on the other hand, concentrates on human language, which it understands as human competence, a sign system, and individual utterances. Thus, linguistics reconstructs its material object in three formal “objects of linguistics” (Saussure 1916).

Language is, first, the capacity of people to guide cognitive and communicative processes with verbal signs; second, a system of verbal signs that, third, serves as a basis for a linguistic community’s concrete expression of units of a language. Linguists have conceptualized their object of study as a system of signs used for communication (e.g., Sapir 1921); as the entirety of all possible utterances in a language community (e.g., Bloomfield 1926); as the set of sentences in a formal system (Chomsky 1957); or as an “activity basically of four kinds: speaking, listening, writing and reading” (Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens 1964, 9).

- In terms of human capacity, language is the genetically-determined, neuro-physiologically-based talent of people to communicate and think linguistically. By using language, all humans are capable of exchanging information about things that are far beyond the immediate communication situation. An example from the *Leba* case are the demonstrations which took place in another part of the world and referred to events from another point in time.
- In terms of a system of verbal signs, language is what is used for communication by a particular community. The media item in the *Leba* case draws on two quotes, one in Arabic and one in English, both translated into German for the target audience of the news program.
- In terms of concrete traces of “using language” (Clark 1996), language consists of utterances and material representations. “Voie tranquille”, the tranquil way as a leitmotif by the *Leba* journalist, represents a stretch of language, a nominal phrase consisting of two short words, a total of fourteen characters and one blank, written and spoken on February 14, 2007. However, what language use means in contexts such as “human knowledge”, the “understanding of social action” and the “mediation of social relations” (Sealey & Carter 2004: 44), needs to be clarified.

Researching language use means first and foremost examining stretches of verbal signs. They are the result of language use and form the basis for new language use. That is how language production, products and comprehension interact as “structured social contexts within which people seek to pursue their interests” (Sealey & Carter 2004: 18). The processes of language use can be investigated as individual cognitive activity, as social activity, or as socio-cognitive activity (Figure 4).

Research focus		Social	
		–	+
Cognitive	–	language used	language use as situated activity giving indirect access to socio-cultural structures: settings and resources
	+	language use as situated activity giving indirect access to individual, mental structures: psychobiography	language use as situated activity giving indirect access to individually reflected socio-cultural structures

Fig. 4: Language use as situated activity and an interface to cognitive and social resources.

For the leitmotif and the quote in the *Leba* case, this four-fold approach to language (e.g., Brumfit 2001: 55–56; Cicourel 1975; Filliettaz 2002; Leont’ev 1971; Vygotsky 1978) means:

- As stretches of language used, the quotes of the leitmotif appear in a news item and are implicitly or explicitly related to former texts and contexts. Whereas the audience can see and hear where the quotes come from, most of them will not link the *tranquil way* to *express way*, which is what the boat connection is called in the region the item reports on.
- As cognitively based activity, the use of the leitmotif provides evidence of the journalist’s professional biography and knowledge about dramaturgy, stereotypes, metaphors, and the region his item covers.
- As a socially-based activity, the use of the leitmotif and the journalist’s reflections show that other journalists reproduce narratives and stereotypes, in this case about the violence in Lebanon. An analysis of mainstream media discourse about this topic would provide similar results.
- As an individually reflected socio-cognitive activity, finally, the use of the leitmotif and the approval of it in the subsequent newsroom conference show how individuals can willingly vary or even start to change the narratives reproduced in newsrooms and societies.

2.3 Media discourse as writing at work

Writing research conceptualizes writing as the production of texts, as cognitive problem solving (e.g., Cooper & Matsuhashi 1983), and as the collaborative practice

of social meaning making (e.g., Gunnarsson 1997; Prior 2006). It investigates writing through laboratory experiments and field research. The experimental research explains cognitive activities such as micro pauses for planning (e.g., Torrance 2008). The field studies provide knowledge about writing processes in settings such as school and professions. The present state of research results from two paradigm shifts (e.g., Schultz 2006).

- In a first paradigm shift, the focus of interest moved from the product to the process. Researchers started to go beyond final text versions and authors' subjective reports about their writing experience (e.g., Hodge 1979; Pitts 1982). Draft versions from different stages in a writing process were compared. Manuscripts were analyzed for traces of revision processes, such as cross-outs and insertions. This approach is still practiced in the field of literary writing, where archival research reveals the genesis of masterpieces (e.g., Bazerman 2008; Grésillon 1997).
- A second paradigm shift took research from the laboratory to "real life" (Van der Geest 1996). Researchers moved from testing subjects with experimental tasks (e.g., Rodriguez & Severinson-Eklundh 2006) to workplace ethnography (e.g., Bracewell 2003), for example to describe professionals' writing expertise (e.g., Beaufort 2005: 210). Later, ethnography was complemented by recordings of writing activities (e.g., Latif 2008), such as keylogging. The first multimethod approach that combined ethnography and keylogging at the workplace was progression analysis (Perrin 2003).

Writing research in the field of media discourse sees newswriting as a reproductive process in which professionals contribute to glocalized (Khondker 2004) news flows by transforming source texts into public target texts. This happens at collaborative digital workplaces (e.g., Hemmingway 2007), in highly standardized formats and timeframes, and in recursive phases such as goal setting, planning, formulating, revising, and reading. Conflicts between routine and creativity, or speed and accuracy, are to be expected (Ruhmann & Perrin 2002).

Based on such knowledge from writing research, writing education develops contextualized models of good writing practice, evaluates competence according to these models, and designs writing courses (e.g., Jakobs & Perrin 2008; Jones & Stubbe 2004; Olson 1987; Surma 2000).

2.4 Media discourse as journalistic communicational offer

Communication and media studies foreground the *media* aspect of discourse and reflect on the nature of the *media* concept in general. In a very broad view, many things can serve as a medium in communication: a sound wave carrier such as the air, a status symbol such as a car, or a system of signs such as the English language. In a stricter sense, a medium is a technical means or instrument to produce,

store, reproduce, and transmit signs. However, this definition is still very broad. Media could mean all technical communication media such as postcards, the intranet, and even a public address system. Every form of communication except face-to-face conversations uses such technical tools.

- *Media* in a stricter sense can mean *news media*, for example. A news medium is a technical means used to produce and publish communicative offers of public importance (such as news pieces) under economic conditions (e.g., Luhmann 1996). *News medium* is socially, economically, and communicatively more strictly defined than *medium*.
- *Communicative offers of public importance* contribute to the production of public knowledge and understanding in societies whose “institutions of opinion” (Myers 2005) reach far. Abandoning the stereotype of violent people in Lebanon, and realizing that demonstrations there can be tranquil and peaceful, fosters social understanding in a regionally (e.g., Androutsopoulos 2010) and globally (e.g., Blommaert 2010) connected world.
- *Economic conditions* means the obligation to create value as a “constrained author” (Reich 2010) in work-sharing, technology-based (e.g., Pavlik 2000; Plesner 2009), and routinized (e.g., Berkowitz 1992) production processes (e.g., Baisnée & Dominique 2006). The protesters’ quotes go through an intertextual chain of economic value production. At each station, journalists select source materials, revise them, and sell them to new addressees.
- *To publish* means the professional activity of disseminating “content” (e.g., Carpentier & De Cleen 2008) outside of the production situation, to audiences unknown as individuals. The *Téléjournal* newsroom addresses an audience that can only be described statistically, using sampling techniques and projections.

2.5 Media discourse as newswriting

The main disciplines involved in the analysis of media discourse production – linguistics, writing research, and journalism studies – point at a gap to be closed by an interdisciplinary applied linguistics of newswriting: investigating “the role of the practitioner in the production of news language, an approach largely absent from existing linguistic research” (Cotter 2010: 1). Put simply, this means finding out what journalists want to do and what they actually do when writing their contributions to media discourse, and why they do it: their strategies, practices, routines, and procedures (Figure 5).

Situated activity here means doing media discourse as an individual and collective in multi-layered social contexts of newsrooms, media organizations, news flows, and society at large. Such situated activity manifests itself in dynamic entities of text production (e.g., Lillis 2008: 374). Strategies represent potential dynamics, whereas practices, routines, and procedures represent actual dynamics (e.g., Bisailon 2007).

Situating activity of text production	[– dynamics] static entities of text production: text product, formulation, genre, ...			
	[+ dynamics] dynamic entities of text production	[+ target focus] strategy	...	...
		[+ activity focus] practice	...	...
		[+ pattern] routine	[+ institutionalized] procedure	...
				...

Fig. 5: Manifestations of the situated activity of text production.

Writing strategies can be defined as the reinforced, conscious, and therefore articulable idea of how decisions are to be made during the act of writing so that the writing process or text product has a great probability of fulfilling the intended function (e.g., Perrin 2011: 1868). Strategies are recursive: they can contain sub-strategies. Individuals and collectives dispose of and apply repertoires of writing strategies: the sets of strategies available when writing, for example when recontextualizing quotes for new contributions to media discourse.

In contrast to strategies, practices refer to actual activity. The data format of strategies is [do X because Y is true], of practices it is only [do X]. Routines are automated practices, and procedures are institutionalized routines: the activities one normally performs unconsciously as a member of a social group such as a newsroom team, such as using pictures showing violence when reporting from a place in the world one considers to be dominated by violence.

3 Methodology: Four complementary methods

When focusing on newswriting, the analysis of media discourse needs research methods to generate data about writing activities in complex contexts. The next sections present four prototype methods applied in the research of newswriting, using them as examples of how to investigate media discourse as a window onto cognitive and societal structures and processes. These methods are: version analysis (Part 3.1), progression analysis (3.2), variation analysis (3.3), and metadiscourse analysis (3.4). In media discourse analyses, such methods are often triangulated in a multimethod approach (4).

3.1 Tracking intertextual chains with version analysis

Analysts of verbal communication investigate first and foremost stretches of language, i.e. linguistic products (e.g., McCarthy 2001: 115). From this product per-

spective (see above, Part 2.2), a media linguistics that focuses on what is special in newswriting will emphasize the intertextual chains within news flows: new texts are quickly and constantly created from earlier ones. What happens to the linguistic products in this process can be determined with version analysis.

Version analysis is the method of collecting and analyzing data in order to reconstruct the changes that linguistic features undergo in intertextual chains. The basis for comparing versions is text analysis. Version analyses trace linguistic products and elaborate on the changes in text features from version to version throughout intertextual chains. The quotes from the protesters in the *Leba* item, for example, have been serially processed by at least five stations of intertextual reporting and, at the same time, of economic value production (Part 1.3). Some prominent medialogic studies draw on version analyses to reveal how news changes throughout the intertextual chains (e.g., Van Dijk 1988; Bell 1991: 56 ff.; Luginbühl, Baumberger, Schwab & Burger 2002; Robinson 2009; Lams 2011). A frequent variant of version analysis compares text versions before and after revision processes. Newswriting analyses can contrast, for example, text versions at four production states: after drafting, after the journalist's office sessions, after video editing, and after speaking the news in the booth (Perrin 2013: 232). A minimal, non-comparative variant of version analysis is the text analysis of a single version, with implicit or explicit reference to other versions that were not explicitly analyzed (e.g., Ekström 2001). This variant of version analysis is widespread in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk 2001; see also critiques by Stubbs 1997 or Widdowson 2000). Comparing various versions of finished texts is sufficient to gain knowledge about how texts are adapted from version to version. However, version analysis fails to provide any information about whether the journalists were conscious of their actions when re-contextualizing or engaging in other practices of text production; whether the practices are typical of certain media with certain target audiences; or whether the issues associated with those practices are discussed and negotiated in the editorial offices. To generate such knowledge, additional methodological approaches are required (parts 3.2–3.4).

3.2 Tracing writing processes with progression analysis

Analysts of verbal communication can treat language as an interface between situated activity and cognitive structures and processes. From this cognitive perspective (Part 2.2), a media linguistics interested in the particularities of newswriting will emphasize individuals' language-related decisions inside and outside the newsrooms. What exactly do individual journalists do when they create customized items at the quick pace of media production? What are they trying to do, and why do they do it the way they do? This is what progression analysis captures.

Progression analysis is the multimethod approach of collecting and analyzing data in natural contexts in order to reconstruct text production processes as a cog-

natively controlled and socially anchored activity. It combines ethnographic observation, interviews, computer logging, and cue-based retrospective verbalizations to gather linguistic and contextual data. The approach was developed to investigate newswriting (e.g., Perrin 2003; Sleurs, Jacobs & Van Waes 2003; Van Hout & Jacobs 2008) and later transferred to other application fields of writing research, such as children's writing processes (e.g., Gnach, Wiesner, Bertschi-Kaufmann & Perrin 2007) and translation (e.g., Ehrensberger-Dow & Perrin 2009). With progression analysis, data are obtained and related on three levels.

Before writing begins, progression analysis determines through interviews and observations what the writing situation is (e.g., Quandt 2008) and what experience writers draw on to guide their actions. Important factors include the writing task, professional socialization, and economic, institutional, and technological influences on the work situation. In the *Idée suisse* project, for example, data on the self-perception of the journalists investigated were obtained in semi-standardized interviews about their psychobiography, primarily in terms of their writing and professional experience, and their workplace. In addition, participatory and video observations were made about the various kinds of collaboration at the workplace.

During writing, progression analysis records every keystroke and writing movement in the emerging text with keylogging (e.g., Flinn 1987; Lindgren & Sullivan 2006; Spelman Miller 2006) and screenshot recording programs (e.g., Degenhardt 2006; Silva 2012) that run in the background of the text editing programs the journalists usually use, for instance behind the user interfaces of the news editing systems. The recording can follow the writing process over several workstations and does not influence the performance of the editing system or the journalist.

When the writing is done, progression analysis records what the writers say about their activities. Preferably immediately after completing the writing process, writers view on the screen how their texts came into being. While doing so, they continuously comment on what they did when writing and why they did it. An audio recording is made of these cue-based retrospective verbal protocols (RVP). This level of progression analysis opens a window onto the mind of the writer. The question is what can be recognized through this window: certainly not the all of the decisions and only the decisions that the author actually made, but rather the decisions that an author could have made in principle (e.g., Camps 2003; Ericsson & Simon 1993; Hansen 2006; Levy, Marek & Lea 1996; Smagorinsky 2001). The RVP is transcribed and then encoded as the author's verbalization of aspects of his or her language awareness: writing strategies, and conscious writing practices (Part 2.5).

The data of these three stages complement each other to provide a multi-perspective, vivid picture of the object of study. In sum, progression analysis allows researchers to consider all the revisions to the text as well as all the electronic resources accessed during the production process; to trace the development of the emerging media item; and, finally, to reconstruct collaboration at media workpla-

ces from different perspectives. The main focus of progression analysis, however, is the individuals' cognitive and manifest processes of writing. Social structures such as public mandates, organizational routines, and editorial policies are reconstructed through the perspectives of the individual agents involved: the writers under investigation. If editorial offices or even media organizations are to be investigated with respect to how they produce their texts as a social activity, then progression analysis has to be supplemented by two other methods: variation analysis and metadiscourse analysis (parts 3.3 and 3.4).

3.3 Revealing audience design with variation analysis

Analysts of verbal communication can treat language as an interface between situated activity and social structures and processes. From this social perspective (Part 2.2), a media linguistics interested in the particularities of newswriting will focus on how social groups such as editorial teams customize their linguistic products for their target audiences. Which linguistic means, for example which gradient of formality, does an editorial office choose for which addressees? This is what variation analysis captures.

Variation analysis is the method of collecting and analyzing text data to reconstruct the special features of the language of a certain discourse community. The basis for comparing versions is text and discourse analysis. Variation analyses investigate the type and frequency of typical features of certain language users' productions in certain kinds of communication situations, such as newswriting for a specific audience. What variation analysis discerns is the differences between the language used in different situations by the same users (e.g., Koller 2004) or by various users in similar situations (e.g., Fang 1991; Werlen 2000).

In the *Idée suisse* project for example, variation analyses show systematic differences between the three news programs investigated. The relation of item length and cuts, for instance, document a higher pace of pictures in the French *Téléjournal* (4.5 sec. on average between visible cuts) than in the German *Tagesschau* (8.5 sec.) and *10 vor 10* (7 sec.). Similarly, variation analyses can reveal whether language properties of the newscast *Tagesschau* and the newsmagazine *10 vor 10*, competing in the same German television program of the Swiss public broadcaster, differ according to their program profiles.

Such broadly-based variation analysis is able to show the special features of the language used in certain communities or media. However, what the method gains in width compared with a method such as progression analysis, it loses in depth. Why a community prefers to formulate its verbal contributions to media discourse in a certain way and not another cannot be captured by variation analysis. It would be possible to regain some of that depth by using a procedure that examines not only the text products, but also the institutionalized discourses connected with them – the comments of the community about its joint efforts.

3.4 Investigating language policy-ing with metadiscourse analysis

Analysts of verbal communication can treat language as an interface between situated activity and cognitive and social structures and processes. From this socio-cognitive perspective (Part 2.2), a media linguistics interested in the particularities of newswriting will focus on editorial metadiscourse such as quality control discourse at editorial conferences or negotiations between journalists, anchors, and cutters. What do the various stakeholders think about their communicational offerings? How do they evaluate their activity in relation to policies – and how do they reconstruct and alter those policies?

Metadiscourse analysis is the method of collecting and analyzing data in order to reconstruct the socially- and individually-anchored (language) awareness in a discourse community. The basis for analyzing the metadiscourse of text production is conversation and discourse analysis.

Metadiscourse analyses investigate spoken and written communication about language and language use. This includes metaphors used when talking about writing (e.g., Gravengaard 2012; Levin & Wagner 2006), explicit planning or criticism of communication measures (e.g., Peterson 2001), the clarification of misunderstandings and conversational repair (e.g., Häusermann 2007), and follow-up communication by audiences (e.g., Klemm 2000). In all these cases, the participants' utterances show how their own or others' communicational efforts and offerings have been perceived, received, understood, and evaluated. The analysis demonstrates how rules of language use are explicitly negotiated and applied in a community.

In the *Leba* case for example, due to a computer crash, the journalist lacks the time to discuss his item with the cutter. In other case stories from the *Idée suisse* project, cutters challenge the journalists' ethics and esthetics or appear as critical audience representatives. On a macro level of the project, interviews and document analyses reveal policy makers' and media managers' contradictory evaluation of and expectations towards the broadcasters' – and the journalists' – ability to promote public understanding (Part 1.2).

The focus of metadiscourse analysis, thus, scales up from negotiations about emerging texts at writers' workplaces (e.g., Perrin 2011) to organizational quality control discourse and related discussions in society at large. Integrating metadiscourse analyses extends the reach of progression analysis from a single writer's micro activity to societal macro structures.

4 Conclusion: Mutual benefits

The above presented theoretical perspectives on verbal communication (Part 2, in particular 2.2) and methodological approaches (3) each capture overlapping facets

of newswriting from their own angles, for example the source material, the work context, the thought patterns, the sequences of revisions in the writing process, the text products, the news programs, the editorial mission statement and policy, and the internal and external evaluation and development of norms. Each approach has its own focus, complementing the strengths of the other approaches (Figure 6).

Language as →	Product	Activity		
		Cognitive	Social	Socio-cognitive
Method → Object facets ↓	Version analysis	Progression analysis	Variation analysis	Metadiscourse analysis
Source material	text chain			
Work context		workplace, ...		
Thought patterns		writing strategy		
Revisions		writing activity		
End products	final version			
News program			program profile	
Policy			mission, ...	
Evaluation				norm discourse

Fig. 6: Medialinguistic methods as complementary approaches.

The next table (Figure 7) illustrates the interplay of the four methods by using the leitmotif example from the *Leba* case where the journalist changes “voie express” to “voie tranquille” (Part 1.4).

Language as →	Product	Activity		
		Individual	Social	Socio-cognitive
Method → Object ↓	Version analysis	Progression analysis	Variation analysis	Metadiscourse analysis
Phenomenon: voie [express] > voie {tranquille}	reframes!			
	consciously?	consciously!		
		systematically?	systematically!	
			approved?	approved!
Statics	result	activity	standards	approval
Dynamics	revision	emergence	contrast	dissemination

Fig. 7: The emergent leitmotif in the *Leba* case, as captured with four complementary methods.

- A micro version analysis comparing the first and the last version of the corresponding sentence shows the difference: one word has changed. The researcher interprets this revision as a reframing of the boat's speed and, in a wider context, of the activities the media item reports.
- However, only progression analysis provides evidence that the journalist consciously changed the word to use it as a leitmotif. Moreover, progression analysis indicates that this idea emerged when the experienced journalist was surprised by details from the source materials he carefully read and watched.
- A variation analysis contrasting processes and products by experienced and less experienced journalists then can reveal experience to be a strong predictor for success in handling critical situations and for results with a high potential to promote public understanding.
- A metadiscourse analysis, finally, can show whether the journalist's emergent solution is approved in the following editorial conference, and whether it corresponds, on a macro level, to the expectations of both media managers and policy makers. Such successful emergent solutions deserve to be disseminated through knowledge transformation measures.

The discussion has shown that newswriting, as an example of verbal discourse in the media is accessible from complementary perspectives and that each perspective calls for suitable methods. Questions about cognitive practices, for instance, can only be addressed using insights into cognitive relationships; the same is true for social practices and their interactions. Investigating stretches of language in a “one-size fits all approach” (Richardson 2007: 76) is not enough – it cannot explain what is special about journalistic news production (e.g., Philo 2007) and fails to reveal structures that “cannot be directly observed” (Ó Riain 2009, 294). The analysis of verbal communication in media discourse definitely benefits from interdisciplinary endeavors (Part 1.1) – and so do the disciplines involved.

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Mark Aakhus and Stephen DiDomenico

19 Language and interaction in new-media environments

Abstract: This chapter reviews key features and principles of language and social interaction as they apply to communication in new media environments. These include turn-taking, identity & face concerns, speech as action, expandability of sequences and activities, methods of coordination and repair, community and culturally bound assumptions about communication, and the emergent and dynamic outcomes of communication's design. The review first attends to how these features and principles of face-to-face (FtF) interaction are evident in mediated communication in the way people adapt language use to the demands of communication and the mediated environment. Second, the review reverses ground to highlight how language use is implicated in technological design and thus how new media are part of a pragmatic web that extends features and principles of language and social interaction for communication across space and time. In this way, information and communication technologies, are important opportunities for insight into the nature of mediated communication. Central to this chapter is the view that technologically-mediated communication can be understood as linguistic and social practices for communication that are adapted to the demands of non-FtF environments.

Keywords: language, social interaction, media, Information technology, practice, design, design features, pragmatic web

1 Introduction

There has been considerable interest in how language is used in the environments of interactive electronic media. Much of this interest is inspired by the fact that advances in information and communication technology create the possibility for interacting across time and space where co-presence may not be possible or even primary. Given that language itself evolved relative to face-to-face (FtF) interaction and that much of what is known about language use is based on FtF interaction, such an interest poses an important challenge to knowledge about these fundamental processes of human communication. It is not unusual for electronically-mediated communication¹ to be understood as fundamentally new and different

¹ There is little agreement about the language that should be used to denote this particular type of social interaction. In earlier literature (e.g., Herring 2001), "computer-mediated communication" had gained disciplinary support yet today it has lost considerable prominence due to its failure to

from FtF communication and that technology somehow determines these differences.

Another possibility, developed in this chapter, is that the role of technology does not necessarily lead to a fundamentally different understanding of language use for communication. Instead, the *basic processes* of human communication still operate while the *practices for interacting and achieving* communication may differ. New media may disrupt given forms and conventions of language use or afford disruptive opportunities to invent forms and conventions for achieving different qualities of communication across time and space. The apparent differences between FtF and mediated communication, and the varieties of communication particular to different media, may be manifestations of principles of communication that yet require further understanding. In this way, information and communication technologies are important opportunities for insight into the nature of communication and the *process* of how it happens.

There is yet a deeper point to consider, however, by conceiving of new media not as conduits of verbal exchange but instead as aspects of communicative context that is integral in how meaning making itself is accomplished. New media are thus implicated in verbal interaction and language use in two interrelated ways: First, uses of language are adaptations of communication principles to new media settings; second, new media settings materialize linguistic and social practices through technological means for achieving communication across time and space. Essentially, new media are technologies for communication that are extensions of human creativity in exploiting principles of language and interaction to achieve communication. This happens in the adaptations to new media environments but also in the design of new media environment, especially the pragmatic and argumentative web (Aakhus 2006; Schoop, de Moor & Dietz 2006; Singh 2002) where new media design plays a significant role in constructing forms of dialogue.

2 Taking a language and social interaction (LSI) perspective

Across the many disciplines with interests in Language and Social Interaction (LSI), there is a shared curiosity regarding the primacy of the interaction order (Goffman 1983) and the uses of language in it. There is a particular emphasis on how language itself is systematically organized in a variety of ways beyond the units of word and sentence (see Leeds-Hurwitz 2010 or Tracy & Haspel 2004 for an overview of the LSI tradition from the perspective of the communication disci-

capture the breadth of electronic devices that may now mediate human interaction. For a more comprehensive discussion of this debate regarding terminology, see Herring (2013).

pline). For instance, Jacobs (1994: 199) notes that discourse analysis “is an effort to close the gap between conceptions of communication process and language structure and function. Its research questions center on the role of language in constructing an ‘architecture of intersubjectivity’ (Heritage 1984; Rommetveit 1974).”

As Jacobs points out, when examined beyond the unit of the sentence, language patterns may be discovered at several different levels: conceptual structure that organizes content (texts, stories, conversational topics); pragmatic structure that organizes linguistic action and interaction (speech acts, adjacency pairs, conversational episodes); stylistic structure that integrates linguistic features with the characteristics of person and situation (style, codes, message design logics). Scholarship in LSI has investigated these patterns of language use in interaction and goes on to show that these patterns are not simply structures or mere conventions but instead bear some relationship to resolving puzzles of the interaction order and the achievement of intersubjectivity. Jacobs (1994) summarizes these as the puzzle of *Meaning* (How is it that people convey meaning in saying something or infer meaning from what has been said?); *Action* (How is it that people do things with words?); and *Coherence* (How is it that people coherently coordinate meaning and action?).

Patterns of language use reveal the creativity of individuals and collectives in finding ways to make communication possible. To understand the uses of language in interactive electronic media requires seeing this human creativity in exploiting principles of language and interaction to achieve communication across time and space. Research and theory related to LSI illustrates that new media become part of the pragmatics of interaction while pragmatist information systems research (e.g., Ågerfalk 2010; Golkuhl & Lyytinen 1982) illustrates how language use is central to the creation and use of new media.

Aakhus and Jackson (2005) identify seven key facts about interaction drawn from LSI research that matter for language use and for technological design. While much recent attention has been given to verbal communication that occurs within a given kind of social media or information system (e.g., Ling 2008; Thurlow & Poff 2011; West 2013), these seven facts draw attention to how technologies for communication are not merely conduits through which messages are sent but implicated in the process of communication itself. Furthermore, these facts help articulate how technologies not only become intertwined in the pragmatics of communication but also enmeshed as agents in interactivity and the achievement of communication, thus revealing the two faces of language use in interactive media.

The review first attends to how what appears to be matters of FtF interaction are evident in mediated communication in the way people adapt language use to the demands of communication and the mediated environment. Second, the review reverses ground to highlight how language use is implicated in technological design and how new media are part of a pragmatic web that extends principles of

LSI. We next discuss seven key facts about communication design by first considering the concept from its point of inception in LSI domain and then pointing to how it plays out in mediated settings.

3 The pragmatics of electronically-mediated interaction

3.1 Turn taking

Turn taking refers to speakers' methods for coordinating who will take the speaking floor next, a recurrent, practical problem of everyday interaction (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974). Conversation analysts have examined the regular practices through which conversational participants incrementally build speaking turns as well as manage their mutual access and sensemaking. Indeed, conversation analysis goes so far as to view turn-taking as the fundamental technology of interaction (Hutchby 2001; Sacks 1992). The ways in which interaction is arranged makes different social and epistemic resources available for the task at hand. Thus, as ordinary practices for taking-turns are suspended different institutional projects can be achieved (e.g., cross-examination, interviews, purchasing). The growing literature on talk in institutional settings has shown how variations in turn-taking formats generate different ways to construct and display relevant contributions to the activity at hand. Ordinary interactional conduct may be engineered by a range of institutional objectives, identities, and inferential frameworks (Drew & Heritage 1992; Heritage & Clayman 2010). In the context of dispute mediation, for instance, the turn-taking is altered through the involvement of a third-party mediator who disrupts ordinary turn-taking methods in a manner that focuses the disputants on resolving their disagreement (Garcia & Jacobs 1999).

Forms of new media, like different face-to-face contexts, bring forth their own sets of opportunities and obstacles for how participants go about making communicative contributions. Considerable attention has been given to new media as disruptive of ordinary conversational turn taking. According to Herring (2001), two core properties of the mediated environment typically lead to obstacles in how we coordinate interaction (cf. Herring 2013). The first, disrupted turn adjacency, occurs when the system may display messages to participants in a way inconsistent with the order in which they were constructed. In a classic study, Garcia & Jacobs (1999) described the "quasi-synchronous" nature of online chat, referring to the way in which the sequential placement of each typed contribution was dependent upon the degree of "lag" that came between message construction and being displayed. Similarly, Hutchby and Tanna (2008) examined how, due to the "technically mediated floor", participants may be unable to mutually monitor each other's construction of (text message) turns. This feature of the technology has consequences for

how participants experience issues of simultaneous talk and overlap since they are unable to project when a speaker “holds the floor” or is finished with their turn until the message is transmitted from one user to another.²

The second property discussed by Herring (2001) is the dearth of the type of feedback that is ordinarily encountered in face-to-face interaction, that which is relatively simultaneous and rich in audiovisual cues. Schönfeldt and Golato (2003), also examining online chat sessions, found despite this identified “lack” of conventional, fully synchronous feedback, the interactions still featured evidence of being finely coordinated and locally managed between participants. In the case of Hutchby and Tanna’s research, the aforementioned differences afforded for turn allocation procedures also shapes the way in which participants organize sequences of action. Unlike Sack’s principle of contiguity which posited a structural preference for responding to the last and most recent action within a multi-unit turn, the authors found that “complex format” (multiple action) text messages were managed by its recipients as a type of list and responding to them in the original (chronological) order in which they were composed (or “reproducing the action structure” of the original complex text, see p. 161).

Despite these overarching differences in how technically-mediated interaction may unfold, participants have generally adapted to such constraints by developing a variety of discursive practices for managing and displaying turn-to-turn relevance. One such practice, described by Werry (1996), is related to *addressivity* (cf. Bou-Franch, Lorenzo-Dus & Blitvich 2012; Sveningsson 2001). One way in which participants coordinate the transfer of speakership in FtF interaction is to explicitly select them (via proper names, eye gaze, or gestures such as pointing) as being designated to take the next speaking turn. Particularly in multi-party online chats, as Werry demonstrates, participants can adapt to the impoverishment of other interactional resources for turn allocation by specifying the addressed recipient of a particular message (e.g., “Kally I was only joking around”, see Werry 1996: 619). Weger and Aakhus (2003) made a similar contribution in describing the adaptability observed in online chat rooms dedicated to discussion about public issues. Given the core design features of the chat rooms – anonymous participants, turn-length limits, and continuous scrolling of the unfolding interaction – chat participants developed “work arounds” (including explicit mentioning of addressees) in order to facilitate the effective exchange of arguments about the issues under discussion (cf. Hutchby 2001).

A second practice used by participants is to preserve (or recreate) the intended turn position by “quoting” those participants to which the message is responsive to (Severinson-Eklundh 2010; Severinson-Eklundh & Macdonald 1994). Select portions of a previous message may be referenced or a simple copying and pasting of

² As noted by Schegloff (1990), the sequential position of utterances is a critical resource by which participants in interaction establish (and maintain) coherence (cf. section 3.4).

the earlier message in full, each of which roots the exchange via a larger process of contextualization. This practice is one means by which participants maneuver amidst the constraints imposed by communication designs and lends insight into how the quoting of prior interactional contributions³ may still serve as key resources for meaning making in mediated contexts.

While ICTs may disrupt ordinary turn taking, we can also see that people are inventive in figuring out means for making contributions in the circumstances at hand. Picking up on the spirit of the seminal paper by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), technology invites research and theory to examine the speech-exchange systems that people invent for managing turn-taking under a wide variety of conditions.

3.2 Identity & face concerns

Dating back to the groundbreaking work of Erving Goffman (1956, 1967), everyday interaction has been a key site for understanding processes of self-presentation and identity management (see also this volume, chapter 9). Identities are continually negotiated through the management of interactional activities at hand in dealing with the obligations and commitments of maintaining face. While doing so, they also manage competing communication goals, problems in understanding, and rights to specialized knowledge and expertise, just to name a few examples (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998). Participants' concerns related to identity management are what Goffman called "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (1967: 5). This may in turn shape whether one chooses to participate in an interaction while the substance of what is actually contributed may be affected by concern for the identities of recipients. Both sets of considerations, along with various social and relational factors, contribute to how participants' view what are permissible strategic and expressive choices. Further, this emphasizes identity as an active, situated accomplishment that is co-constructed between interlocutors in interaction (Mokros 1996).

Identity and face are omnipresent concerns for participants in interaction in any environment – mediated or otherwise. People adapt discursive practices to fit the particular constraints and affordances of technical spaces in order to manage their identities. Bernicot, Volckaert-Legrier, Goumi, and Bert-Erboul (2012) examined text (SMS) message exchanges between French-speaking adolescents for features of "SMS register" such as message length, dialogue structure, and discourse function (cf. Thurlow & Poff 2013). They found that individual-level characteris-

³ For a discussion of "reported speech" in the context of co-present interaction, see Buttny 1998, Holt & Clift 2007 or Tannen 1995.

tics – such as age, gender, and experience with the SMS medium – shaped some of the linguistic features of the interactions. Moreover, they found that users who were 15–16 years old were likely to avoid utilizing an opening or closing in their exchanges. In this way, identity was seen as evident in the way that the adolescents utilized particular adaptations to the technical constraints of the particular modality (i.e. using a particular “register”).⁴

Koshik and Okazawa (2012) conducted a conversation analytic investigation of various source of miscommunication in online library reference interactions between librarians and library patrons. Some of the core problems targeted by the participants were related to the differences in expertise across both identities (i.e. expert and novice). Golato and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) demonstrated how online chat participants adapted to the technological constraints of the system to negotiate issues of face and social solidarity. Users were shown to still orient to practices of appropriate behavior and preference organization from FtF interaction through the ways that they structured and organized their turns. Further studies examining face and identity management in mediated contexts has addressed self-presentation in the “status updates” afforded by the social media platform *Facebook* (Lee 2011; Page 2010; West & Trester 2013). Common to each of these investigations is the manner in which people discover ways to make communication happen while also managing issues of identity and face.

Technologies and their implicit assumptions about communication play an important role in the ways people construct, manage, and challenge identities. Nonetheless, in cases where technical systems may constrain or prevent the enactment of certain identities, the natural instinct to achieve communication drives people to adapt to the affordances available. In the end, Goffman’s observations about self presentation still hold relevance for the interactional resources of mediated environments and how they become part of the method for communicating identity.

3.3 Speech as action

Originally proposed in the lectures of J. L. Austin (1962), a *speech act* refers to the action that is performed through speakers’ use of language. Put simply, in saying things we *do* things. In doing things, we take on obligations and generate commitments (Searle 1969; Hamblin 1970). Since there is no necessary connection between utterances at the surface of talk, speech acts have been used as an analytic tool to

⁴ It is worth noting that the authors conclude by posing the question of whether CMC-related registers should be considered a register all their own (separate from oral or written), since “computer mediated writing does not remain stable over time ... its extremely rapid rate of change poses a true challenge to researchers in this field” (p. 1712).

describe how reasoning and shared background knowledge play a role in social organization. Social action is organized around the negotiation of obligations and commitments such that actions do not merely co-occur but bear a recognizable and accountable relationship to each other (e.g., questions/answer; requests/grant-denial). Although each of these commitments vary in their degree of explicitness in talk, each contributes to an evolving sense of “what is happening” among interlocutors. These insights are extended in studies that describe, for instance, the social organization of therapy (Labov & Fanshel 1977), large-scale businesses and bureaucracies (Winograd & Flores 1987), and argumentation (Jacobs & Jackson 1992).

The role of commitments and obligations in the organization of mediated communication has been examined in Lewinski’s (2010a; 2010b) analysis of online political deliberation. Lewinski’s analyses show that online discussions develop around the arguable elements of the propositional and pragmatic commitments to which contributors can be held accountable. Thus, despite the number of parties with divergent/diverging opinions and the asynchronous contributions, parties perpetuate polylogues by attending to meaning, action, coherence of contributions – and in particular to their emerging argumentation structure. This is not to say that contributions are typically reasonable but to say participants collectively exploit the potential for reasoning and mutual knowledge to engage each other – even across time and space.

Adopting a pragmatic understanding of language provides a window into the accomplishment of social action. Each of these activities, whether in face-to-face or mediated contexts, also carry different collateral commitments. Similarly, while technologies imply particular visions of the commitments important to its users, these may be resisted and challenged in how they go about actually using and adapting to their affordances.

3.4 Expandability of sequences and activities

Many of the most fundamental activities involved in communicating often consist of series of type-related speech acts, or what Conversation Analysts have called *adjacency pairs*. These basic building blocks of interaction typically include some type of sequence-initiating speech act (e.g., request, invitation, greeting) followed by an adjacent and pair-related responding act (grant or denial, acceptance or rejection, greeting).⁵ Alternatively, Levinson (1979) has proposed the notion of “activity types” to refer to any form of culturally recognizable activity. These bounded

⁵ Conversation analysts have also shown that speakers may expand these basic activities beyond a two-part series of “moves” to more complex courses of action (for instance, see the discussion of *pre*, *post*, and *insert expansions* in Schegloff 2007; for a broad picture, see this volume, chapter 9).

events are also likely to hold constraints for settings, participants, and what constitutes an allowable contribution. Levinson's idea helps explain why the communicative activities tied to, for instance, teaching young children, participating in a job interview, or attending a dinner party are likely to be quite distinct in communicative texture. The collateral commitments associated with sequences and the continual negotiation of speaker change thus create the potential for an indefinite expansion of communicative activity.

Activities may also be expanded in being sustained over time and space due to the affordances of technologies. The increasingly media-rich nature of social life makes a variety of forms of interaction possible. It appears, however, that this also calls for a further sense of expandability, one that looks beyond the immediate FtF sequential context of ordinary conversation. Communicative activities may also be expandable across different communicative modes – that is, across face-to-face and technologically-mediated channels for communication. Individuals may make use of (and invent) a constellation of communication channels (e.g., voice-based functions of mobile phones, text messages, instant messaging, email, etc.) to manage meaning and sustain relationships across iterative sequences of activity, thereby showcasing further ways in which people adapt to (and exploit) technological affordances for the purposes of communicating. DiDomenico and Boase (2013) discuss how the use of particular electronic devices (mobile phones), including the actions they are used to perform, can become woven into – and even prioritized over – the ongoing social fabric of the co-present interaction (cf. Licoppe 2012). They analyzed several ways in which these technologies can be attended to as a focal activity or one that is subordinate to the in-progress activity within the co-present encounter (cf. DiDomenico, Raclaw & Robles 2014; Raclaw, Robles & DiDomenico 2014).

As these studies show, the affordances of particular designs for communication may be used in concert with other sets of interactional resources. Although recent theoretical thinking about media multiplexity suggests relationships with strong ties can be reinforced using multiple media tools (e.g., Haythornthwaite 2002), work in anthropology has stressed how single events (e.g., dyadic conversations) may create or extend larger “chains” of interconnected speech activity (Agha 2007; Wortham 2005). A single interaction, then, may actually be extended and maintained over the course of multiple media channels (e.g., beginning as face-to-face, to mobile text messaging, then to social media platforms, etc.) while still comprising one coherent strand of meaning making (cf. Ling 2008; 2012). Thus, activities that humans sustain will enroll technologies as needed.

To summarize, sequences of speech activity are indefinitely expandable. Technological tools that support expandability supplement the human motivation to renew and extend possibilities for social action. Such uses and adaptation to particular designs for communication provide further support for the human drive to *achieve* communication. Nonetheless, there is still much to know about the com-

plexity of the relationship between genres of communication and different media platforms and devices (e.g., Yates, Orlikowski & Okamura 1999).

3.5 Coordination and repair mechanisms

Managing issues of alignment and mutual understanding are crucial for accomplishing any communicative activity – face-to-face or otherwise. Conversational repair refers to the retroactive attention and action to issues of problems of speaking, hearing or understanding among interlocutors (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977; cf. Kitzinger 2013). The existence of discursive practices for repair reflects the larger demands of communication related to meaning, action, and coherence, among others. Moreover, repair further explains the importance of expansion and expandability in human communication (See the prior section).

Seminal research in the tradition of Conversation Analysis has documented the basic practices for implementing repair and coordinating interaction amidst signs of “interactional trouble” (Schegloff 1987). A core distinction in the literature is whether the repair is initiated by the speaker of the trouble source (“self-initiated repair”) or the recipients (“other-initiated repair”) as well as which of these parties provides a “solution” to the repair (i.e. “repair completion”) (Kitzinger, 2013). A related body of research in psycholinguistics has explored the role of language in building, sustaining and repairing “common ground” (Clark & Brennan 1991). This common ground is continually updated in interaction through what is referred to as a process of “grounding”.⁶ Across both analytic approaches, the coordination of repair and understanding in face-to-face interaction is understood to be an active and inherently collaborative accomplishment, while also requiring a shared repertoire of methods for negotiating these unfolding contingencies.

Participants’ methods for achieving repair in mediated contexts may be disrupted and even require new means for effective coordination. Suchman (1987) revealed a great deal of complexity with respect to this issue in a classic study of human-machine interaction. Findings indicated that the expert help system embedded within a photocopy machine lacked the ability to recognize or respond to signs of interactional trouble and thus became a clear obstacle for successful interactions with the technology. As this case suggests, some designs for communication technologies may have insufficient means for supporting the repair mechanisms that are typical of ordinary FtF interaction.

The reason the machine-human interaction worked, when it worked at all, was due to the extraordinary adaptability of the human user to the technological con-

⁶ cf. Heritage 1984 for a similar discussion of intersubjectivity in interaction, whereby participants check their recipient’s understanding through evidence provided in their subsequent response (or lack thereof).

straints. Participants of online chat sessions have been found to utilize “self initiated, self completed, same turn repair”, essentially meaning they edit their contributions before “sending” or adjust them in light of immediately prior postings for their interlocutors (Garcia & Jacobs 1999; Schönfeldt & Golato 2003). Schönfeldt and Golato (2003) further examined the sequential placement of chat users’ moves to initiate or complete repair sequences relative to the turn containing the trouble source (i.e., the repairable turn). In “next-opportunity repair” (i.e. *after* the turn containing the repairable has been sent), for example, the producer of the trouble source may provide a full repeat of the preceding turn with the error corrected (e.g., misspelling of a word, and other examples of repairables).

Although each of these repair techniques are approximations of their equivalent in face-to-face conversation, Schönfeldt and Golato also observed a trouble source unique to this context. This occurred when a participant’s speech act failed to receive a response from its recipient(s), leading to the participant orienting to the “silence” as either server-related issue or the recipient overlooking (or overtly ignoring) the turn and then initiating repair (cf. Rintel, Pittam & Mulholland 2003). Each of these cases of discursive adaptations and invention provide further support for how the limitations of the technology (in this case, the repairable turn being un-editable after being sent or ambiguity as to whether a recipient “received” a given contribution) may lead to participants’ creation of new techniques for repairing interactional road bumps (cf. Markman 2010).

Outside of practices for repair in face-to-face contexts then, people can create new techniques and procedures for dealing with interactional trouble. These practices are likely to be created with respect to both what the given technology affords and the activity that is to be achieved. Close examination of these repair-related activities in mediated contexts opens a further window to how participants draw from and adapt practices of face-to-face interaction in technology-abled interactions.

3.6 Culture or community-bound assumptions

The Ethnography of Communication was developed as a lens for examining how communication is situated within larger systems of culture (Carbaugh 1988; Hymes 1974). The individual practices for accomplishing any speech act or more complex communicative activity may be dependent upon (and only be recognized with respect to) the cultural assumptions of the speech community (Fitch 1994). Philipsen (1975) revealed the different beliefs and ideals associated with a particular way of speaking, “talking like a man” based on ethnographic field work in a working-class neighborhood in Chicago and several middle-class neighborhoods on the west coast of the U. S. One finding of this work was that speakers’ membership in particular communities (as opposed to others) shapes what assumptions they hold about what are appropriate forms of talk and interpretation.

The maintenance of community-based expectations for communication is evident in mediated communication as well. Groups and communities jointly develop shared practices necessary for mediated communication to occur. Baym (1995) argued that community in computer-mediated contexts is best understood as “grounded in communicative practice” and created “through the interplay between preexisting structures and the participants’ strategic appropriation and exploitation of the resources and rules those structures offer in ongoing interaction” (p. 139). Along similar lines, Nilsen and Mäkitalo (2010) examined the relatively quick pace by which shared methods for interaction emerged during a five-week set of in-service trainings held online. Fairly early on in the training, participants displayed standard practices for selecting others as addressees, sequentially “tying” one’s turn to a previous turn through quotation, and waiting for one’s turn at talk. Thus, as Baym argued, establishing community is indeed a communicative possibility in these mediated spaces.

Adopting a view of online community as grounded in communicative practice draws attention to members’ conventions and their active co-construction in managing the interaction order, thus producing particular forms of communication. Technology is often seen as a *cause* of communication behavior, but the cultural approach advances understanding of how technologies are rendered functional despite the shortcomings of the mediated setting. Aakhus and Rumsey (2011), for example, show how the online practice of “flaming” can be explained as discourse phenomena as opposed to simply being a product of social cues filtered out by technology. Their analysis of an online cancer support group’s flame war revealed deeper struggles within the community about normal supportive communication. Specifically, the community conflict was about competing local ideals for interaction about the right to criticize, the right to vent, and the value of disagreement in communicating support.

To summarize, online groups and communities can be seen as working to develop and regulate their own local assumptions about interaction. So, one can see that a larger collective understanding of how the shared practices of engagement *should* be used may overrule such communicative possibilities. It is this type of community ethos that is crucial for understanding how people use (and adapt to) the affordances and constraints that are tacit in technological systems.

3.7 Outcomes of communication designs are emergent and dynamic

A critical component of mediated communication lies in the classic tension encountered in theorizing about human social behavior between the role of pre-determined plans (or “scripts”) for communication and the spontaneous, emergent unfolding of social life [1] (Sawyer 2001; Suchman 1987). Despite how a technology may be designed for use, participants’ actual application of it in practice may be

entirely different. That is, rather than following the *plan* of the technology, communication emerges in a distinct manner grounded in local contingencies. Technologies are interventions that correspond in important ways to how social institutions may place conditions on communication such as goals, relational status, and epistemic aims (Hutchby 2001; Silverman 1998). As a type of intervention, designs for communication may reflect incongruence with participants' ordinary ways of accomplishing activities, essentially "getting in the way" of their work. This reveals an orientation, even a theory, toward communicative conduct yet one that is not apparent until it is realized in use (Aakhus & Jackson 2005; Aakhus 2002; Hopper 1992; Poole & DeSanctis 1990).

People develop technology-related workarounds. Hopper (1992) discusses the telephone access war and the conditions of caller hegemony that people accommodated to in introducing the telephone into daily practice. Workarounds were developed for this technology as evident in the variations from the canonical sequence of greetings in telephone conversations. Devices and systems may lead to the development of new policies or procedures. Hopper's work also shows how technological innovations address the very imbalance initially generated by the telephone. Thus, access is enabled by technical innovations (cf. Aakhus 2013).

We also see such processes in technologies such as the social media platform, *facebook*. Lee (2011) adopted an ethnographic perspective to examine the communicative functions and localized practices related to facebook status updates. Facebook is a rich case for thinking about the emergence of adaptive practices to designs as it has gone through numerous system modifications in a relatively short time period of time. Initially, its interface for status updates were explicitly framed as a response to the question "What are you doing right now?", though a given user's response was constrained by the inclusion of their first name and the verb "is" being automatically inserted into the beginning of the message (e.g., "Stephen is working"). This "update prompt" has gone through several changes since then, with the removal of the obligatory "is" and the overall question shifting to "What's on your mind?" (see Lee 2011: 111). In addition to the basic prompt, several other features have been introduced to foster further opportunities for participation including a chat function (Meredith & Stokoe 2014) and the "Comment" and "Like" functions within status update threads (West & Trester 2013; cf. Page 2010, West 2013).

With workplace technologies, it is important for designers to carefully consider participants' ordinary routines and expectations for the activities the technologies are intended to model or supplement. As Hutchby (2001) notes, a technological system "tends to impose a logic on the course of the interaction which does not arise from local circumstances and which thereby disables participants from carrying out situationally appropriate ways of dealing with [these issues]" (p. 144). In some cases, then, designers may fail because of the rigidity imposed by the technology and its inability to accommodate the local contingencies of particular

speech events. Whalen (1995) examined how the computer systems designed to aid emergency dispatchers actually hindered the processes of their workflow. With dispatching emergency personnel, call takers may need to take into account the context-dependent circumstances of the area such as the current traffic conditions on a potential driving route. The work of Suchman (1987) also supports this point in her analysis of how the design of a photo-copy system was at tension with employees' ordinary, habitualized work routines.

Each of these cases reinforces the importance of designers' attention to the intrinsically emergent nature of human sociality. They also expose the fact that there is a relationship between the technology, technology designer(s), and the users of a technology. Ordinary interactants not only attend to the affordance a technology offers for pursuing communicative aims, but also the prospect that technology implementation can enforce forms of talk and interaction (e.g., Aakhus 2013).

As Hutchby (2001) noted, a core distinction to be made here is the *ad hoc* nature of face-to-face interaction where conversational interlocutors may carry out local methods that are directly situated around the ongoing courses of action. In contrast, designers' modeled expectations for what should transpire when problems arise may be in conflict with users' local needs. It is in this manner that technologies serve as a type of intervention in having the potential to create a disconnect with what participants actually experience as part of the communication process.

4 Perspectives and conclusions: How is language use implicated in technological design?

It is evident that in the uses of new media, as summarized above, that technologies become part of the pragmatics of human communication. The new opportunities for interacting across time and space introduced by new media do not appear to eliminate principles of language and interaction but instead the technologies are rendered useful by adaptation of these principles to the new media conditions. This can result in new forms of behavior, such as the use of emoticons and hashtags and other inventions for making mediated communication work. The pragmatics of language and interaction, however, are implicated in technology in another way as new media materialize linguistic and social practices through technological means for achieving communication across time and space.

Goldkuhl and Lyytinen (1982; Lyytinen 1985) recognized long ago that ICTs and information systems are social and linguistic systems that are technically realized. ICTs and Information Systems are bundles of categories and rules that associate categories that in turn define roles and relationships among people (Bowker & Star

1999). In this sense, ICTs are relational as technological infrastructures propose, and are used to discipline, the ways in which people relate to each other and to machines (Star & Ruhleder 1996). By affording communication to happen among dispersed actors, information technologies contribute to the institutionalization of forms of talk and action. Technical systems are thus social practices in the sense that they have actability – that is perform actions (Goldkuhl & Ågerfalk 2002) – and that they are metacommunicative – that is they signal how to engage in a particular activity (Goldkuhl 2006).

As social practices for relating people to people, technologies for communication are hypothesis about how to orchestrate interactivity to achieve (or prevent) forms of communication (Aakhus 2002; Aakhus & Jackson 2005). Hypotheses about communication that may or may not work. The point is illustrated in a classic analysis of the use of group decision support systems (GDSS) by diplomats. Lyytinen, Maaranen and Knuuttila (1994) described how diplomats worked around the presumptions about communication by a decision support system that communication is transparent, information exchange. But in order to go about their business, diplomats required support for their subtle negotiation of meaning and interests as the decision support system made the wrong assumptions about the nature of diplomatic work. The systems assumptions about practice and they way it posited relationships and actability ran counter to the community of users.

New media vary in the degree to which they project interactional expectations, such as the kind of contributions others are expected to make and the kinds of roles to play. Expectations are more minimal and ambiguous in generic systems, devices, and applications (e.g., mobile phones, email, sms, twitter) and much more explicit and evident in workplace technology, decision support systems, and in systems designed for particular communities. These expectations can be seen in what the new media presume about the seven key facts of interaction. The ways in which users resist, work around, and take up new media in their interaction is telling about what the technology presumes about how communication works and ought to work in regard to turn-taking, identity, action, expandability of sequences, repair, coordination, community norms, and emergent outcomes. The way that an ICT or Information System contends with these facts of communication matters for the technologically enabled practice that develops.

Rather than seeing technical and the social merely as two different realms, a pragmatic view sees technology as an extension human creativity in devising practices for engaging each other to do things together. In order to do things together people in dyadic, group, organization, community, or societal relations, negotiate solutions to taking turns, taking up identities with each other, preferable actions, acceptable expansion of interactional sequences, repairing breakdown, coordinating actions, preferable norms for interacting, and contending with emerging outcomes of interaction. In this sense, people in co-operation with machines design communication through the choices made about managing their interactivity. It is

the consequences of this communication design that inspires the idea of a pragmatic web.

The pragmatic web (Aakhus 2006; Schoop, de Moor & Dietz 2006; Singh 2002) is a way of conceptualizing new media as context dependent relations among people, ICTs, and information systems. A pragmatic web stands in contrast to a pervasive, conventionalized view of new media as systems of transmission for context independent knowledge. Instead, new media co-evolve and become part of a community's ontology as it is tied into and made part of a communities discourse. The new media can become part of the way of talking. In this sense, new media become part of the background knowledge and ways of reasoning particular to communities. The intervention of new media can expand or contract the direction and content of a community's discourse as it affords the management of disagreement among community members (de Moor & Aakhus 2013).

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François Cooren

20 Verbal communication in organizational settings

Abstract: This chapter presents a growing body of research focused on the role communication plays in the functioning and constitution of organizations. After presenting the interpretive perspective on organizational communication, I propose to focus on the work of conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists who, especially since the 1990s, have been interested in studying the detail of what they call ‘institutional talk’, i.e. the interactional order that typically emerges in institutional and organizational contexts. Finally, I end this chapter with the CCO (communication as constitutive of organization) movement, introducing the work of key authors such as Deirdre Boden or James R. Taylor, as well as other scholars who have been associated with what is today known as the Montreal School of organizational communication.

Keywords: Communicative constitution of organization, institutional talk, Interpretivism, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis

1 Introduction

The study of communication in organizational settings emerged toward the end of the 1960s in the United States, especially due to a 1967 NASA conference on organizational communication organized by one of the founding fathers of this discipline, Philip K. Tompkins (1967). Since then, a growing body of research has emerged, focused on the role communication plays in the functioning and constitution of organizations (for more details, see Corman et al. 1990; Jablin and Putnam 2001). In this chapter, I will not summarize the ins and outs of this discipline – this has been done very well elsewhere (see, for instance, Ashcraft et al. 2009) – but rather concentrate on studies that focus specifically on the detailed study of verbal communication in organizational settings.

Studying verbal communication can indeed be done in many different ways, whether in organizational settings or not, and it seems fair to say that communication studies have paradoxically not been that interested in directly studying and observing acts of communication, *per se* (Cooren 2007). Today, most research in this field still relies on interviews, questionnaires and survey methods to study organizational communication, which means that communication ends up being explored through the retrospective accounts that people give of their practices and activities. In this chapter, I will therefore focus on studies that strive to *directly*

analyze the details of verbal communication as a communicative perspective on organizations should focus on its very object, i.e. communication, especially verbal forms of communication (Cooren 2012).

In what follows, I first present the interpretive perspective on organizational communication, which can arguably be deemed as the first attempt to take the subject of organizational communication seriously (Putnam & Pacanowsky 1983). I then propose to focus on the work of conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists who, especially since the 1990s, have been interested in studying the detail of what they call ‘institutional talk’, i.e. the interactional order that typically emerges in institutional and organizational contexts (Drew & Heritage 1992; Heritage 2005). Finally, I end this chapter with the CCO (communication as constitutive of organization) movement, introducing the work of key authors like Deirdre Boden (1994), James R. Taylor (2000), as well as other scholars who have been associated with what is today known as the Montreal School of organizational communication (Benoit-Barné & Cooren 2009; Brummans et al. 2014; Fauré et al. 2010; Mumby 2007; Robichaud 2006).

2 The interpretive agenda

What is the role of verbal communication in the constitution and functioning of organizations? Up to the 1980s, this question did not make much sense, as researchers tended to reduce communication to an organizational factor among many others. Studying organizational communication therefore consisted of focusing on formal vs. informal channels of communication or superior-subordinate relations (Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault 2001). (Verbal or written) communication was an organizational element that certainly deserved to be studied, but was mainly conceived as an independent variable, which was thought to make a difference in how organizations function (Redding 1985; Tompkins 1967). Positivism and functionalism were the norms in organizational studies, and organizational communication (in the US, at least) was certainly not an exception (Miller 2001).

It was only in 1981, with the organization of the Alta Conference, at a mountain retreat close to Salt Lake City, Utah, that a group of young American communication scholars started to question the hegemony of this functionalist approach (Taylor et al. 2000). Influenced by key authors such as Berger and Luckmann (1966), Burrell and Morgan (1979), Garfinkel (1967), Giddens (1976), Habermas (1971), and Weick (1979), they started to discuss alternative ways to conceive of organizational forms, which led them to develop interpretive and critical approaches to organizational communication (Putnam & Pacanowsky 1983). According to these approaches, organizational reality had to be understood as “socially constructed through the words, symbols, and behaviors of its members” (p. 35), a position that led them

to “adopt a pluralistic perspective by treating the organization as an array of factionalized groups with diverse purposes and goals” (p. 37).

Since organizations did not have to be taken for granted anymore, their unity and homogeneity could then be questioned, which led these interpretive scholars to focus on *organizing* instead of organization (Mumby & Stohl 1996; Weick 1979). Focusing on organizing meant studying how people *get things done* (or don’t) in talking with each other, whether during meetings, informal conversations or public speeches. According to this perspective, organizations could then be conceived of as “coalitions of participants with different priorities” (Putnam 1983: 37). This approach also paved the way for critical perspectives on organizational communication. Some scholars started to develop an emancipatory agenda by examining how specific interests and priorities – those of the managers and owners – end up counting more than others, a situation that could then be questioned and transformed (Deetz 1992; Deetz & Kersten 1983; see also Mumby 1987, 1988)

Despite this focus on communication per se, the methodology employed by these scholars to investigate the organizing property of communication did not allow them to really focus on verbal acts of communication. Interpretive research was essentially interested in members’ sensemaking activities, which led these researchers to mainly rely on interviews or even surveys to demonstrate the key role communication plays in the creation of organizational forms (McPhee & Tompkins 1985; Putnam & Pacanowsky 1983). Through these studies, important contributions were made, focusing on the question of organizational identification (Cheney 1983a, 1983b; Tompkins & Cheney 1985) and culture (Smircich 1983a, 1983b; Smith & Eisenberg 1987; Weick 1987), but it remained to be shown how the detailed study of oral and written forms of communication could shed a light on the constitution and functioning (or dysfunctioning) of organizations.

3 Interaction Analysis

An exception, however, can be identified with the research movement broadly defined as Interaction analysis (IA), especially through Gail Fairhurst’s (1993, 2004) work. This quantitative approach to discourse analysis consisted of focusing on how frequently certain types of verbal communication take place, especially in the context of groups (Bales 1950) and organizations (Keyton & Wall 1989). Based on a predefined set of categories, the representatives of this approach strived to detect how specific interactional systems emerge from the repetition of specific conversational patterns, whether in the context of negotiations (Bednar & Curington 1983; Donohue 1981; Putnam 1990; Putnam & Jones 1982), leader-member exchange patterns (Fairhurst 1993), or technology implementation (DeSanctis & Poole 1994; Poole & DeSanctis 1992).

For instance, system-interaction research, which is based on Bateson's (1972) and Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) systems theory, proposed to detect patterns of interaction by which control moves are asserted, accepted, or neutralized. This body of research contributed to establishing, for instance, that excessive forms of dominance and relational control by one individual (usually the supervisor or the person in authority) tend to be detrimental to harmonious relationships, while the sharing of control tends to lead to positive outcomes (Courtright et al. 1989; Fairhurst et al. 1995; Fairhurst & Cooren 2004; Tullar 1989; Watson 1982).

4 Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis: Institutional talk and workplace studies

It is only as of the 1990s that scholars started to really take the detailed study of interaction in organizational contexts seriously. Two conversation analysts, Paul Drew and John Heritage (1992), edited a landmark volume titled, *Talk at work*, which presented a series of studies devoted to doctor-patient interactions, job interviews, emergency call services, legal hearings, and many other situations typical of workplace and institutional settings. While conversation analysts had historically been interested in everyday talk in interaction – e.g., between friends over the phone or between family members around a kitchen table (Heritage 1984a, 1984b; Pomerantz 1980, 1988; Sacks 1984; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; for a general discussion see this volume, chapter 9), some started to be more attentive to what they called “institutional talk”, which led them to identify how participants negotiate a specific interactional order in this type of setting (McHoul & Rapley 2001).

According to this approach, institutional talk can be said to display three basic features: 1. the participants tend to orient to specific goals that are directly related to their institutional identities, 2. only specific kinds of contribution are considered permissible and treated as such by the participants, and 3. typical procedures, protocols, and inferential frameworks are associated with this type of performance (Heritage 2005, see especially p. 106). In keeping with these basic assumptions, this type of analysis thus considered the institutional or organizational context to be “both a project and a product of the participants’ actions” (p. 109). In other words, it is “talked into being” by the participants (Heritage 1984), one interaction at a time.

As pointed out by Heritage (2005), institutional talk is characterized by a specific turn-taking organization, which can be found in the context of courts of law (Atkinson & Drew 1979; Levinson 1983), news interviews (Bull 1994; Bull & Mayer 1993; Clayman 1991, 1992; Clayman & Heritage 2002a, 2002b; Greatbatch 1986, 1988), classrooms (Heap 1997; Markee & Kasper 2004; Seedhouse 2004), and doctor-patient interactions (Maynard & Heritage 2005), among many other institution-

al settings. In this kind of context, turn-taking procedures can be pre-allocated, i.e. predefined (this is the case, for instance, in court rooms where the witness or accused is only allowed to answer questions that are asked of him/her) or/and mediated, i.e. controlled by someone (usually, the chair) whose responsibility is to allocate the turns of talk. This is, for instance, what tends to happen in business meetings (Pomerantz & Denvir 2007).

Heritage (2005) also notes that institutional talk is characterized by specific structures. For instance, emergency service calls tend to be structured according to five phases, which Zimmerman (1992a, 1992b) identifies as 1. Opening, 2. Request, 3. Interrogative series, 4. Response, and 5. Closing. Although this kind of structure could look somewhat predetermined, conversation analysts convincingly show that it has to be *co-constructed*, for another next first time, by the participants. For example, in the case of emergency calls, this is done by the emergency service representative and the caller. In some cases, the caller can appear not to cooperate, which renders the co-construction of this process more difficult and less fluid.

As pointed out by conversation analysts, all these constraints and procedures – whether they concern the way turns are designed or organized in sequences – are not only talked into being, but also actively exploited, reinforced, and sanctioned by the participants. In other words, if actors sometimes appear to follow them blindly, some specific moments of noncooperation, breakdowns, and repair show how participants can be very quick at defending their (institutional) rights and reminding others of their (institutional) obligations (Labov & Fanshel 1977).

In parallel with these studies on institutional talk, another research movement, sometimes called *workplace studies* (Heath, Luff & Knoblauch 2004), also emerged by drawing upon conversation analysis and ethnomethodology. This movement – which shared some common features with Lucy Suchman's (1987, 2007) situated cognition, Engeström's (1987, 1990, 1995, 1996) activity theory, and Hutchins's (1990, 1995) distributed cognition – also relied on the detailed study of interaction, but this time to unveil the key role technologies and tools play in teamwork and collaboration. While conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists had been historically preoccupied with the verbal aspects of talk (but see Goodwin 1982; Goodwin & Goodwin 1996), workplace studies scholars invited us to pay attention to the material and visual aspects of collaboration and coordination (Heath & Luff 2000).

As Heath, Luff and Knoblauch (2004) pointed out,

Objects and artefacts, tools and technologies, are not simply constituted through talk, but rather inform the very ways in which participants produce and recognize social action and activities – the collaborative accomplishment of workplace activities emerging in and through the material environment. (p. 353)

Far from being reduced to mere elements of an interactional context, tools and technologies were thus shown to actively participate in the production of verbal

interactions, which themselves contribute to the coordination of activities. Technologies and tools are therefore analyzed according to the ways they affect or even transform the ways in which people interact in these types of environment.

Some scholars, however, argued that these types of analysis – institutional talk and workplace studies – tend to be exclusively interested in the organization of interaction and not that much in the mode of existence and functioning of organizations, *per se* (Fairhurst & Putnam 2004; Putnam & Fairhurst 2001). For instance, Deirdre Boden (1994), in her landmark contribution, *The Business of Talk*, noticed that ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts

never ‘study organizations’ in the conventional sense. They are not interested in organizations, but in organization, which is to say that they are animated by a curiosity for the *organization of experience* and the ‘extraordinary organization of the ordinary’. Activities in organizational and work settings are, for ethnomethodologists, simply a marvelous way of unraveling the fine detail of social organization (p. 31, italics in the original)

While conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists are interested in ‘structure in action’, that is, how participants endogenously enact a specific *interactional order* by communicating with each other (whether in organizational settings or not), organizational scholars tend to be interested in ‘organization in action’ (Boden 1994; Cooren 2007), that is, the interactional sources of organizational order (or disorder).

5 Taking communication seriously: The CCO hypothesis

In parallel with these studies on institutional talk, another research agenda started to grow from the beginning of the 1990s, which was conceived as an attempt to take seriously the detailed study of interaction, while remaining faithful to what matters to organizational scholars, i.e. how organizations exist and function. Although it is difficult to determine the starting point of this movement, it could arguably be identified with the work of James R. Taylor (1988), who at the end of the 1980s published, in French, a book titled *Une organisation n’est qu’un tissu de communications: Essais théoriques* (An organization is but a web a communication: Theoretical essays). Although this book did not meet the success it certainly deserved, it was the first attempt to theoretically articulate a reflection linking verbal communication and the mode of being and functioning of organizations.

At the heart of this perspective, which was later labeled the CCO (Communication as constitutive of organizations) approach (Putnam & Nicotera 2009), lies a quote from James Dewey (1916/1944), a quote that Taylor reproduced in his 1988 book:

Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. (p. 4, emphasis in the original, quoted in Taylor 1988: 201, as well as in Taylor & Van Every 2000: 69)

In other words, organizations, institutions, and societies should not be treated only as – i.e. reduced to – a special context that actors orient to or talk into being when they communicate with each other, but also as what *comes to exist and function through what they say and do*.

5.1 Deirdre Boden: The Lamination of conversations

Incidentally, it is this agenda that Deirdre Boden (1994) proposed to follow, even if the reference to Dewey's insight is, to my knowledge, absent from her work. As she noticed, criticizing both conversation and organizational analysts:

My suggestion to those concerned with talk-based work activities will be that the recursive features of both talk and its organizational context matter – to the talk, as well as to *how the organization is created and sustained through talk*. To organizational analysts who typically treat language as simply given, on the other hand, I am proposing that *the very constitution of organizations depends on the production of local knowledge through local language practices*. (p. 75, my italics)

Organizations are not just locales where people talk and conduct themselves; they are, according to Boden, constituted in and through talk. What remained to be shown, however, was *how* this is happening, that is, how it is possible to *scale up*, so to speak, from conversations to organization as a whole, i.e. from the micro to the macro (Taylor & Van Every 2000).

Borrowing a concept from Erving Goffman (1974), Boden (1994) proposed that an organization be conceived as a *lamination of conversations*. By lamination, she meant that different conversational layers come to build on each other to constitute the organization as a whole. Even if conversations and meetings always remain local and situated, participants actively contribute to reintroducing past conversations into what they are talking about at a specific time (Oswick & Richard 2004). Effects of continuity and sequencing, which are typical of organizational forms, were thus presented and analyzed by Boden as resulting from these laminations by which various organizational episodes come to get articulated with each other.

What Boden (1994) thus reminded us is that organizations are first and foremost animated by the necessity to *get things done collectively*. As she pointed out, organizational members in specific locales are constantly attending to what others are doing in other locales, which creates the very conditions for articulating their respective contributions.

By positioning their local actions in the sequential flow of related departments or organizations ... they similarly mark the essential recursive quality of organizations. The result is not the fragmentary breakdown of organizational life posited by the postmodernists, but the conscious montage of action and reaction that produces the organization *from within*. (p. 207, emphasis in the original)

By pointing out the recursive quality of organizations, she thus echoed Giddens (1984) and to some extent, Garfinkel (1967), for whom the source of ordering has to be endogenously found *in the conversations themselves*. The recursive dimension of conversation – which is where organizing is supposed to take place (and nowhere else) – thus means that conversations can take other conversations as their object of discussion, creating an articulation between various activities and decisions.

5.2 James R. Taylor: Texts and conversations

Even if Deirdre Boden's (1994) idea of lamination definitely constituted an important contribution to our understanding of how organizations function and evolve, some scholars came to question her exclusive focus on human agency and conversations. For instance, Boden even wrote that

organizations do not act or do anything, people do. If we accept, at least as a working assumption, that organizations are the people who comprise them, then what we need is a far finer grasp of human action. (p. 56)

It is precisely this “working assumption” that James Taylor (2000; Taylor et al. 1996) and some of his colleagues came to question.

As Robichaud, Giroux and Taylor (2004) noticed, organizations indeed *do act*:

Even the most superficial scan of any daily newspaper is enough to confirm a general, as well as specialist, tendency to attribute to organizations intentions, emotions and understandings, with identical language commonly used to talk about the subjective states of individuals. Here are a few examples, gleaned from the daily press: “the department's decision”, “the manufacturer agrees”, “the department was forced to admit”, “the FBI is frustrated”, “the party recognizes”, “the Senate approves”. (p. 618)

While communication studies had been marked by an almost exclusive interest in how members locally and conversationally enact their organizations, Taylor and his colleagues reminded us that organizations also tend to be considered full-fledged actors with specific rights and obligations (Katambwe & Taylor 2006).

According to these authors, if organizations do emerge from communication, they should be both understood as *realized* and *described* objects (Taylor & Van Every 2000). Organizations are indeed locally realized (or enacted) in *conversations*, but they should also be conceived of according to their textual properties,

that is, as described by specific *texts* that reaffirm their existence, constitution, and mode of functioning. While conversations are marked by their evanescent, fragmented, local and improvisational nature, texts are characterized by their relative permanency, stability, and translocality, which precisely allows them to be identified and recognized. Organizations should thus be considered both conversationally and textually based, a duality that defines not only their emergent but also their structured and instituted nature (Robichaud 2006; Taylor & Van Every 2000).

As Taylor and Van Every (2000) pointed out, two worldviews of what constitutes an organization can thus be identified. According to these authors, an organization is

- a) a lived world of practically focused collective attention to a universe of objects, presenting problems and necessitating responses to them; and b) an interpreted world of collectively held and negotiated understandings that link the community to its past and future and to other conversational universes of action by its shared inheritance of a common language. (p. 34)

These two versions – and this is a key point in Taylor and Van Every's argument – are *irreducible* to each other. While the first version a) correspond with the site of organization (where the organization is conversationally realized), the second b) constitutes its *surface*, that is, the organization as it is textually described, recognized and made present to its members.

Specific texts are thus talked out each time members communicate. These texts, according to Taylor and Van Every (2000), have the particularity of explicitly or implicitly mobilizing *narrative features* where typical breaches can be identified, as well as generic actors who are endowed with specific objectives while confronting certain obstacles and mobilizing helpers and resources (Bruner 1991; Greimas 1987). Any text thus offers what they call a sense of *closure* (typical of narratives), which defines what is supposed to *constitute* an organization at a specific point in time (Deetz 1992; Giddens 1987; Mumby 1988; Robichaud et al. 2004). Beyond the conversational world where organizations are realized and performed, Taylor and Van Every highlighted a textual world where specific organizational discourses can be recognized and identified.

In many respects, this position echoed Alvesson and Kärreman's (2000, 2010) well-known distinction between small-d discourse and big-D Discourse (see also Gee 1999). While small-d discourse corresponds with the interactions and conversations that constitute (the daily activities of) an organization, big-D discourse can be identified with the texts that are *typically* or even *generically* produced during these conversations and interactions, offering a specific repertoire or register that can be produced and recognized in a discussion (Fairclough 1995; Iedema et al. 2004; Wetherell 1998). It is therefore through a specific Discourse (with a big D) – what Taylor and Van Every (2000) would call a text – that people (actors and analysts) will recognize what is supposed to *characterize* or *identify* an organization and its representatives, i.e. what animates them, what they are up to, and what

values, norms, objectives, or principles tend to define their actions and conversations (Brummans 2006).

6 The communicative constitution of organization: Some basic objects of analysis

Since the middle of the 1990s, a research agenda – retrospectively called the CCO perspective (Ashcraft, Cooren & Kuhn 2009; McPhee & Zaug 2000; Putnam & Nicotera 2009; Taylor et al. 1996) – has been underway, with the objective of identifying the key aspects of verbal communication that define its constitutive role in the mode of being and functioning of organizations. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will present some of the key concepts and phenomena that define this perspective.

6.1 Authority and imbrication

As pointed out by Benoit Barné and Cooren (2009), adopting a constitutive view of verbal communication allows us to identify the many different ways through which authority – a key aspect of organizational action – can be accomplished and established in interaction. Etymologically speaking, authority and authorship indeed share the same Latin root *augere*, which, as Benveniste (1969) reminds us, means both ‘to augment’ and ‘to produce’. Establishing one’s authority in a conversation thus consists of implicitly or explicitly staging or referring to other figures that are supposed to be also *authoring* what one is saying (Taylor & Cooren 1997; Taylor & Van Every 2000). It is by presenting and adding these figures as the *authors* of a given position or action that the force or clout of what is said or put forward can thus be augmented, amplified, or increased (Cooren 2010, 2012).

Some formal sources of authority are more obvious than others. For instance, when person X makes a public speech as the CEO of her company, it is also, for all practical purposes, this company and its CEO that are also deemed as literally and figuratively speaking in these circumstances (Cooren & Matte 2010). This CEO constitutes one of the main voices of this company in that what she says can then practically and sometimes legally engage her organization as a whole. In terms of authority, we can therefore acknowledge an augmentation, amplification, or increase in terms of *who* or even *what* is speaking in these circumstances: it is not only person X, but also the company’s CEO and even the company itself that can be said to be expressing themselves in these circumstances (Nicotera 2013; Putnam & Nicotera 2010). All these figures can be said to be *imbricated* one into the other (Taylor 2002, 2011; Taylor & Van Every 2000).

Other forms of authority are, of course, more implicit, as in what happens when someone implicitly invokes various sources of authority that are supposed to *lend weight* to what she is putting forward (Cooren 2010; McDonald 2010). This is, for instance, what takes place whenever someone justifies, explains, or accounts for a given position to the extent that such a conversational move consists of staging what *makes* or *leads* this person to say what she says, i.e. what gives her authority (Fairhurst & Cooren 2009; Saludadez & Taylor 2006; Varey 2006). As pointed out by Taylor and Van Every (2011), authority has a lot to do with what Charles Sanders Peirce (1955) identified as thirdness, that is, the law, rule, value, or principle that appears to govern or drive a specific action or position (which Peirce identified as secondness).

Whenever we analyze a conversation, we can thus strive to unveil how each participant implicitly or explicitly represents, embodies, or conveys specific values, principles, rules, or even laws that should govern, according to them, organizational action (Bergeron & Cooren 2012). It is these instances of thirdness that are supposed to define, according to Robichaud, Giroux and Taylor (2004), the *constitution* or *text* of a given organization, group or community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), i.e. what defines its *raison d'être*, main preoccupations, and interests (see also Robichaud 2006). Each conversation can thus be considered the locus where the constitution or text of what participants are individually and collectively supposed to do is negotiated or imposed. Organizationally speaking, it is in this type of negotiation or imposition that collective action is (or fails to be) defined and engaged.

6.2 Identity and consubstantiation

Interestingly, other scholars like Chaput et al. (2011) identified similar mechanisms but this time by mobilizing Kenneth Burke's (1969) dynamic view on substance and identification. Echoing this famous rhetorician, Cheney and Tompkins (1987) noted more than twenty years ago that organizational identification has a lot to do with "the development and maintenance of an individual's or a group's 'sameness' or 'substance' against a backdrop of change and 'outside' elements" (p. 5). In performative terms, (organizational) identification is therefore something that has to be reenacted, nurtured, cultivated and negotiated on the *terra firma* of conversations.

While the term "substance" has been historically associated with essentialist positions that seem at odds with a communication-centered perspective, Burke (1969) reminds us that substance should be considered *an act* (it originates from the Latin verb *sub-stare*, which means "to stand under"). In a way similar to the communicative view on authority, Chaput et al. (2011) thus invite us to analyze how actors implicitly or explicitly put forward or negotiate what is supposed to

stand under or *substantiate* their actions or decisions (see also Charland's (1987, 1990, 1992) constitutive rhetoric, as well as Czarniawska, 1997).

Organizationally speaking, it is in this type of negotiation that the identity of an organization can be (re-)established and (re-)enacted – echoing Garfinkel (2002) – *for another next first time*. Whether we speak of mission statements (Cooren et al. 2007), budgets (Fauré et al. 2010), principles (Brummans et al. 2009), strategic goals (Güney 2006), projects (Sergi 2013), or even tools and artifacts (Weick 1993; Cooren et al. 2008), all these figures “often function as important ties that bind and substantiate an organization (i.e. give it a basis in which members can find (parts of) themselves)” (Chaput et al. 2011: 258). According to this constitutive view, interaction can thus be identified as the site where authority, but also various forms of *identity* are negotiated (see also Bencherki & Cooren 2011; Chaput 2013; Iedema et al. 2004).

As Güney (2006) rightly points out,

Identity construction ... is not simply about establishing a source of coordination. It is about creating a framework that constantly provides the actors a sense of who they become and how they fit into the joint activity environment as the result of their participation in that environment. (p. 35)

It is this kind of framework or constitution that members implicitly or explicitly negotiate when they collaborate.

6.3 Dislocation, embodiment and presentification

Although verbal communication, and interaction in general, are often depicted as situated and local phenomena (Goodwin 2000; Suchman 1987, 2007), a constitutive approach also invites us to attend to how they constantly *dislocate themselves* through what is mobilized, convoked, and invoked by the participants (Cooren & Fairhurst 2009). For instance, an administrator who invokes a policy in order to turn down a specific request dislocates the interaction to the extent that the said policy – which was previously absent from the immediate context of the interaction – can be said to become an active contributor to the way the situation is now defined. It is not only the administrator who is turning down the request, but also the policy, which is presented as preventing him or her from acceding to what is requested (Cooren 2010).

As suggested by this example, verbal communication thus becomes a dislocated locus where many different figures can be invoked, ventriloquized, or called upon in order to *make a difference* in the way an interaction evolves. While conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists already have – implicitly or explicitly – addressed the question of invocation for a long time (see, for instance, Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1997; Silverman 1998), a constitutive approach proposes to go one step further by addressing this question at an ontological level (Nicotera 2013).

Thus, according to this constitutive view, an organization is literally made of a constellation of figures that invite themselves through members' conversations and actions, whether we speak of statuses, policies, hierarchies, procedures, protocols, or mission statements. For instance, something like a hierarchy is certainly embodied, incarnated or materialized in an organizational chart, but also in the way it is played out, invoked and called upon in various interactions (Brummans 2011). There is therefore no more opposition or gap between the world of organizational structures and the world of interactions as it can be shown that these so-called structures are, in fact, *active participants* in the ways conversations evolve (Cooren 2010, 2012).

As Vásquez (2013, Vásquez & Cooren 2012; Vásquez et al. 2012) insightfully shows, these activities of presentification and embodiment thus constitute the way by which an organization spaces itself; that is, makes itself present throughout various geographical locations. Verbal communication thus constitutes the dislocated locus where 1. organization materializes and presents itself, 2. actions are distributed and ordered through space and time and 3. a sense of coherence is narratively and accountably created and sustained. It is thus through acts of communication that an organization can be 'here and there at the same time' (marking its spacing aspect) as well as 'now and then at the same place' (marking its reproductive aspect) (Vásquez & Cooren 2013).

6.4 Ventriloquism, attachment and constitution

As we see in the research agendas associated with the CCO movement, taking verbal communication seriously (Aakhus et al. 2011; see also this volume, chapter 19) consists of showing that many different things come to *express themselves* in a given interaction. Whether it is a policy that a secretary invokes in order to deny a request, an expertise that is mobilized and recognized when a specialist is speaking, or the organization itself that is made to speak when an official representative is announcing the launching of a product during a press conference, all these figures are not only made present (presentified), but are also literally made to *say something* in a given situation.

Acting through the persons who are talking on their behalf (the secretary, the specialist, the official representative), these figures are telling us something. A policy dictates that a request be turned down, an expertise speaks for itself by convincing a given audience, and an organization officially announces the release of a new product. These acts of verbal communication, which can be compared with activities of ventriloquism, consist of staging various actors – a policy, an expertise, an organization – that are deemed to literally speak through the persons who act in their name (Cooren 2010).

If, as Latour (1996) insightfully notes, action is something that is always *shared* between various actors (whether they are human beings, policies, principles, sta-

tuses, etc.), it means that what is achieved in verbal communication is not something that human interlocutors have an exclusive claim to (Bencherki & Cooren 2011). If organizational reality is communicatively constituted, it thus means that all the figures that constitute this reality are made to speak and express themselves when people interact with them or with each other. Ventriloquism thus goes in both directions: if human beings ventriloquize, for instance, things like mission statements, rules, procedures, values, cultures and documents (i.e. if they make them speak), these same human beings are themselves ventriloquized, to the extent that they are also made or led to speak through their attachment to these very things.

Echoing John Dewey (1916/1944), organizations not only continue to exist *by* communication, but it also exist *in* communication, because it is in communication that the organizational world comes to reconfigure or reproduce itself for another next first time. Taking communication seriously thus consists of showing that human beings are not alone on the construction site (Latour 1994), but that the construction of (organizational) reality is shared with other beings or figures that ventriloquize them and that they ventriloquize.

As we saw through this brief overview, studying verbal communication in organizational settings can be much more than adopting a specific lens to study organizations. According to a constitutive view, communication is indeed the very means by which organizations can come to exist and function.

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21 Translation

Abstract: The topic of the chapter is translation and its relation with communication. It is possible to summarize the main characteristics of translation in some points. Translation concerns texts not phrases or words. Translation is a kind rewriting because it has the goal of building an image of a text, of an author or of an entire literary culture and to project them in a different reception environment. Translation changes cultures and has a central role in a communication system. Translation develops a central role in the building of identities and cultures because it brings into play the relation between language and ideology. It also brings into play as a consequence the idea of language as a constant movement, heterogeneous and polymorphic. Finally in translation, meaning does not remain unaltered when “traveling” from one culture to another.

Keywords: texts, rewriting, culture, ideology, identities

1 Introduction

The last thirty years have been characterised by a dramatic surge of interest towards both literary and technical translation.

The literary and publishing industry have seen a shift in the perception of the role of the translator. Lawrence Venuti's notion of the “invisibility” of the translator (1995) is no longer applicable as translators are starting to be acknowledged as contributors to the creation of a cultural product. The number of translated books compared against published book has definitely contributed to this change and has turned the translator's role into one which cannot be ignored. Not only this: translators have also begun to reflect upon their own work and in fact translation has become a standalone research topic, which has broken away from linguistics and literature, acquiring its own tools and methodologies.

This change in the perception of the role of the translator is also connected to a deep transformation of the concept of translation. Until not long ago, was widely accepted that translation consisted in reproducing “the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (Mounin 1963: XII). Such interpretation tends to eliminate the fact that the translation process is the work of an individual who possesses, to a greater or lesser extent, his or her own subjectivity. However, by eliminating traces of subjectivity, one eliminates traces of the translator, because the fusion of the two texts make his or her translation invisible. In other words, the activities of reading and

writing are eliminated; the process simply becomes an invisible hand which mechanically transforms words from one language to another and in this sense translation becomes a pure copy of the source text and not an expression of creativity. This has been the underlying ideology of translation for a long time, and to a certain extent translation is still viewed this way, as proven by the fact that until recently even the name of the translator was rarely – if ever – mentioned.

In recent years, people have begun to acknowledge – even in the publishing world – that translation performs a much more important role. It is pivotal in shaping the identity of a culture in the eyes of other cultures.

This new cultural approach has radically changed the identity of the translator. It is now understood that a translator's abilities go beyond a mere professional contribution. The translator has now become a sort of emblematic figure of our multicultural and multilinguistic landscape.

But this change in perception has not only affect literary and editorial translation. Even so-called technical translation has undergone a profound transformation moving away from a less polished way of working to a more mechanised approach, based on the distribution of work and development of new technologies.

Naturally, our era is not the first to have experienced radical technological transformation in the fields of communication and translated communication. For example, no technological development has been more decisive for translation than the introduction of writing which brought translation from being an oral tradition to a written one. Even the invention of the book has had a great impact on translation and rewriting techniques. Anthony Pym (2000) highlighted the fact that the arrival of paper from the East coincided with the foundation of translation schools in Baghdad in the 9th century and in Toledo in the 13th century. Finally, the advent of movable type systems of printing was a determining factor for the affirmation of the concept of a definitive text and consequently a definitive translation.

The revolution of information therefore is only the latest in a long list of big transformations which have shaped the praxis and concept of translation. What are the features of these changes? First and foremost the means has changed: we have moved away from the fixed nature of printed pages to the fluidity of constantly updatable electronic texts. The impact of this is enormous and particularly significant in translation. Technical translators are frequently asked to work on single updates rather than on texts as a whole, which is the norm for printed works. Following a general trend which is affecting all activities of textual production, translators are now using databases, glossaries and electronic tools more and more often. We can therefore expect that in the future, the concept which has underpinned translation for such a long time, that is to say an equivalence between stable texts which are so to speak “objective” will be weakened.

But without a shadow of doubt, the most innovative linguistic technology is the invention of automated translation. The idea that a machine can translate for

humans is very appealing because it eliminates the main issue encountered by everybody who has travelled abroad to a country whose language they not speak. However, so long as this kind of technology remains limited to specialists or technicians who use what is called Computer Assisted Translation software – a set of tools which are essential for technical translation – then its impact is not so significant. But just think about how fast the use of automated translators among everyday users has spread on computers, smartphones and tablets. This type of software has not been developed to perfection, but it becomes more and more sophisticated as time goes by. It is a technological revolution which may question our shared notion of translation. Just think that the word “translator”, when used in this context, is referred to as an *app* and not a person. In this sense, the “translators” we have on our IT devices adhere to an ideology of translation which goes in the opposite direction to the recent affirmation of creativity and independence of the human translator. So long as automated translators remain unsophisticated, the contrast will not be striking. However, technological research is making enormous progress and we will more than likely have to face significant changes in the near future.

What is therefore the space occupied by translation in the contemporary world? In the 2005 communication of EU dedicated to multilingualism is written:

It has been estimated that the world's top 20 companies providing translation services employ over 10,000 people and have an annual revenue of over €1,200 million; around two fifths of this activity is estimated to take place in the European Union. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005DC0596:IT:NOT>)

Furthermore the document adds:

The language-related industries include translation, editing, proofreading, précis-writing, interpreting, terminology, language technologies (speech processing, voice recognition and synthesis), language training, language teaching, language certification and testing and research. These industries are rapidly evolving in most European countries. Furthermore, the language professions are becoming less clearly defined, with linguists, translators or interpreters being called upon to do a range of multifaceted jobs that involve language expertise. Some universities are putting on specialist courses in “Language industries”. A good command of foreign languages is also necessary for sales, logistics, subtitling, public relations, marketing, communication, cinema, advertising, journalism, banking, tourism and publishing.

In any case, there is also another reason – one which is not so directly linked to professions – that explains the relevance of translation. One of the reasons is that translation reminds us of the fragility of the instruments we use to build our individual and collective identity. We feel Italian or German or French because we share inside our group some cultural conventions among which stand out language or languages we learned when we were children. Language constitutes, and at the same time represents, the framework of values which we feel as our home. Language therefore is probably the most powerful identity-forming instrument. It per-

mits us to know who we are, marking out a boundary between us and the others who speak, have a behaviour and think differently from us. In essence, translation concerns our relationship with others and the way in which a culture creates its own identity (see Gambier 1994) in a process which sees us compare our differences and similarities in an attempt to create a connection between ourselves and others.

The main aspects this research has focused on revolve around these assumptions and have led to the following realisations. First of all, translation concerns texts and therefore complex cultural products. Secondly, translation is a form of rewriting, that is to say a textual production which departs from another text, like paraphrasing, parody and summary. Because translation entails rewriting, a translation changes the original text; it is a sort of “manipulation”, a word introduced into this field by André Lefevere (Lefevere 1992a). It is a manipulation which takes into consideration the expectations and requirements of the target culture but which can sometimes modify it. It is a kind of manipulation also because we translate texts departing from certain assumptions for certain purposes. Assumptions and objectives mould the approach of the translator, influence their translating style and are influenced by the predominating ideologies. All of this tells us that translating is not merely a matter of transposing meaning which remains unaltered from one language to another. This transfer of meaning undergoes transformations which in some way are of a cognitive nature.

2 Translating texts

The beginning of the Seventies in Linguistics meant the passage from sentence to text analysis and this had consequences also in translation.

From this perspective we can consider the work of Katharina Reiss (1976), who tried with the *Skopostheorie* to build a typological framework used to evaluate translation. These ideas have been stressed in a later work written in collaboration with Hans J. Vermeer (Reiss and Vermeer 1984), in which the two authors assert that between source text and target text it is necessary to find a sort of inter-textual coherence which is the real translation fidelity. What is characteristic of this position is that the concept of equivalence concerns texts and is intended as a concept that has different levels. So, more than to try to find an equivalence that is difficult to define, it is important to conceive translation as an attempt to put into dialogue two texts by identifying functions and text types.

The contributions of German scholars Reiss and Vermeer and, generally speaking, the approach of the German functionalist school of thought, are at the basis of the development of Nord's functionalist theory (Nord 2010), which was created in an attempt to create a link between two stances which were being re-suggested in those years. Nord's functionalist theory is the product of two theories: if, on the

one hand, the supporters of the Skopostheorie places the function of translation at the forefront (the function of the target text in its social and cultural context), on the other, those who opposed this theory continued to stress the importance of faithfulness of the source (Cinato, Kather and Lucia 2011: 19).

Nord on the one hand welcomes Reiss and Vermeer's Skopostheorie, acknowledging the importance of the role of the target text in the translation process; on the other hand, she enriches the Skopostheorie with the principle of loyalty to the source text, giving back importance to the original text and the functions performed by it. The combination of these two elements leads to the two main pivotal points of her theory, *Funktionsgerechtigkeit* + *Loyalität* (function + loyalty), a principle which highlights the duplicate responsibility of the translator towards the producer of the source text and the receiver of the target text.

3 Rewriting and manipulation

To translate is a matter of texts, but what happens when we translate texts?

As Skopostheorie has shown, translating means to adopt strategies that are from time to time different in relation to the readers and the context of reception. This induced André Lefevere (1981) to speak explicitly of translation as manipulation and rewriting. To translate is to manipulate and rewrite because translation has a lot of things in common with other kinds of interpretation and textual production, as historiography, literary criticism, and editing. All these activities, in fact, have the goal of building an image of a text, of an author or of an entire literary culture and to project them in a different reception environment. The history of translation, and for example the history of Bible translation, is precisely the history of a community in relation to others. In this sense, to rewrite is to rethink a text in relation to its own cultural coordinates.

In regard to this, it is important to see how the perception of literary property or even the very notion of faithfulness in translation have developed in time. It has been observed that this notion has changed significantly throughout the course of history, in that a translation deemed faithful in a certain period is considered to be unfaithful in another (Lefevere 1985).

4 Translation and culture

Translation changes cultures: what does this mean?

To understand the role of translation in this context and how it changes cultures, we must remember what Antoine Berman (1984, 1999) said when talking about ethnocentrism in translation.

“Ethnocentric” is the approach according to which a culture tends to interpret a connection with other cultures by placing its own at the center and seeing the foreign culture as being something to refuse or to adapt and camouflage within the target culture. An ethnocentric approach inevitably leads to a position in translation, which is “Hypertextual”. With this term, Berman intends all the texts generated from an existing text. For example parody, adaptations, etc.

Ethnocentrism in translation first appeared in the Latin works of Cicero. Berman stresses that for Cicero translation is essentially grasping an original meaning which goes beyond the form. If the objective of translating is to grasp the original meaning, we must necessarily detach ourselves from the body of the text; faithfulness to the meaning cannot be faithfulness to the words (which aren’t original).

But Berman realized that faithfulness to the original and unfaithfulness to the foreign language is, nevertheless, faithfulness to one’s own language, the receiver of the translation. The original meaning is grasped in one language and this is the receiving language and therefore it is deprived of everything that cannot be transferred into it. According to Berman, the pre-eminence of meaning is inevitably expansionist. Meaning cannot be released into a pure language and therefore the ideology of the pre-eminence of the original text becomes the ideology of the language into which the text has been translated.

Such an ideology gives language the status of a semiotic means which is privileged and untouchable. Meaning should enter the language without doing any damage. According to this stance, foreign works should be translated in a way in which translation is not “perceived”; the product has to give the impression that it is what the writer would have written had he/she been writing directly in the translated language. Berman stressed how this desire leads to certain “deforming tendencies” underlying translation ideology in the Western world.

Such deforming tendencies are: rationalization, clarification, expansion, ennoblement vulgarization, qualitative impoverishment, quantitative impoverishment, homogenization, the destruction of rhythms, of underlying meaning, the destruction of textual systematizations, of vernacular linguistic networks, of locutions and idiomatic expressions, of superposition of languages.

What do all these have in common? Rationalization reorganizes sentences according to a certain idea of what is considered to be the correct order of the passage. Clarification is a consequence of this, making clear what does not appear to be in the text or specifying what is not specified in the text. A typical example of this is the transformation of metaphors into similes. Expansion is also linked to clarification and rationalization, in that it explains the text. Naturally, explaining or untangling a text means that the source is considered to be tangled up and therefore not clearly readable; again, this is where metaphors tend to be substituted by similes. Berman considers ennoblement to be the final point of Platonic translation. The translated text is better than the source, it is more elegant or “poetical” in places where the source was less refined. Of course, also the opposite can occur by using a pseudo-jargon which hides the text.

Qualitative and quantitative impoverishment means that, in the first case, expressions of the original are substituted with words of lower iconic value, and in the second case, lexical dispersion occurs. With homogenization, all the levels of the original are unified to some extent. The destruction of rhythm for example impacts on punctuation. The destruction of the significant networks eliminates the underlying connections between key signifiers which do not appear on the surface, but which are fundamental in the economy of the text.

So by destroying systematisms you add or eliminate elements and the text becomes domesticated and is made readable. Finally, the destruction of the vernacular networks, the destruction of locutions and the elimination of the superposition of languages conceals and standardizes the translated text making it a usable product for the reader of the language into which the text is being translated.

The identification of these deforming tendencies is not done to suggest an alternative methodology. It is done rather to show that these are common in any Western translation and correspond to a precise cultural choice.

With Berman, in relation to the role that translation play in cultures, we need to remember the contribution of the school of Tel Aviv, whose main representatives are Itamar Even-Zohar (1990) and Gideon Toury (1995) and who, within the framework of the *Polysystem Theory*, highlighted the heterogeneous cultural conditions in which a translation is carried out. The concept of polysystem is an attempt to define all the activities which are considered to be literary within a culture. In this sense, the polysystem is a system of heterogeneous systems which make up literature, literature being conceived as a system in movement with transformations and continuities. From this point of view, literature is not only considered in an abstract way but is also connected to the judgments of value which belong to a specific historical period. Furthermore, literature is never isolated and is never pure, because it always comes into contact with other literatures creating continuous interferences. These interferences cannot be eliminated in the contacts between cultures and are usually unilateral because literature is a source, it performs this role thanks to its prestige and the fact that the importing system needs to find models which it does not find in itself.

In this sense, a series of oppositions have an important role: the existence of canonical texts and non-canonical texts; between the center and periphery of the system, between innovation and tradition.

The concept of a canonical text is fundamental to understand how certain cultural categories are passed down in a given society. In the case of texts, the pertinence to the canon depends on the legitimacy of the dominating cultural groups. In relation to the concept of canonization, there is the distinction between center and periphery. The center of the literary system is inevitably occupied by canonical texts, in other words, those which have been introduced by the official culture and which have achieved legitimacy of the institution. Also the opposition between tradition and innovation is in relation to the problem of accepting a given work at

a precise time. The tradition, that is to say the fixed repertoire which makes it up, is a secondary system, its texts will be in some way predictable and any attempt to compromise this instability will be perceived as an aggression. On the contrary, the innovator is a sort of primary system in which new elements intervene and where a repertoire becomes defined. A system can be stable or unstable, depending on its ability to handle changes and assimilate them.

Translated literature follows the same reasoning and can become primary or secondary depending on the specific conditions operating in the polysystem. In this sense, translated literature is a system within the literary polysystem. The receiving system selects the foreign literature accepting the literary conventions of the same polysystem. This filter will be applied in relation to the conditions of the receiving polysystem: a fixed polysystem will try to impose its models on translations; on the contrary, a weak polysystem will be subject to the influence of the models it imports. Specifically, translation, if we consider that it is first and foremost a cultural exchange, has a central role in a language in three social situations: when a literature is young or is in the process of being established; when a literature is peripheral or weak; when a culture is undergoing a crisis. In the first two cases, the translated literature is needed to fill in the gaps of the polysystem and it also creates a dependence of the weak or peripheral literatures compared to the central ones. In the third case, translated literature can have a primary function also in central literatures.

5 Ideology

Is there a relation between translation and ideology? No, if we think that translating means to reproduce the original message in all its functions. Yes, if we consider that in many translation projects it is necessary to take decisions and solve complex problems with imagination, experience and cleverness. Ideology is present in every intellectual work, consequently also in translation.

The topic of ideology has an important role to play in post-translation studies. In point of fact Susan Bassnett (1991; Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) already proposed the theme of ideology, identity and culture as a center of interest for translation just at the beginning of the second decade of Translation Studies. The new direction replaced traditional categories such as “source text”, “target text”, and “fidelity” with an expressed interest in the historical, cultural and ideological conditions which determine the translator activity. Similarly and already in the Eighties, André Lefevere (1992a; 1992b) proposed the topic of ideology as a center of interest for Translation Studies. The perspective of Lefevere resembled that of Michel Foucault for whom discourses constitute a complex and unstable system in which they can be an instrument and an effect of power.

Some years later Peter Fawcett (1998), in the article on “Translation and Ideology” published by *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, pointed out that institutions and individuals use their beliefs to motivate and affect translation. The author stressed that it is possible to find an ideological approach to translation in many ancient testimonies. In the same direction, Christina Schäffner in 2003 reminded us that translations are inevitably ideological because ideology always lies behind the selection of a source text and the use to which a target text is put. The interests, scopes, and goals of individuals and institutions shape the work and product of translation. Also Christiane Nord in *Translation as A Purposeful Activity* (1997) noted the same thing: decisions about the process of translation are taken, consciously or unconsciously, on the basis of ideological motivations. This means that ideology is determinant in the definition of goals but also in establishing translating strategies and norms.

At the beginning of the nineties an important book by Tejaswini Niranjana (*Siting Translation. History, Post-structuralism and the Colonial Context* [1992]) addressed the relationship between translation ideology and identity. For Niranjana translation is one the most important fields of study for scholars who want to understand how relationships between cultures are established on the basis of a series of asymmetries. Every culture is the bearer of a whole inventory of implicit values that constitute its ideology. These values are present in the process of translation. We find here a form of dissimulation: concepts like fidelity claim to transform a particular perspective into something considered objective. Derrida would speak in this case of a lie. For example translation has developed a decisive role in building a fixed image of Asian, an image that is foundational to the relationship that the Western world has established with Asia.

In 2003, Maria Tymoczko researched the position of the translator. Translation for Tymoczko places itself in a special space that is the space where existence is defined as “existence in between” two cultures, two ideologies, two languages, two worldviews, and so forth. In this “in between” space we find a blend of linguistic acts of the source text with the linguistic acts of the target context. Ideology shows itself precisely in the space between these two moments.

Translation obliges us to reconsider the role of ideology in the building of identities and cultures. In this sense, translation brings into play the relation between language and ideology. It also brings into play as a consequence the idea of language as a constant movement, heterogeneous and polymorphic.

6 Meaning

Often, in Translation Studies, the concept of ‘equivalence’ of meaning is mentioned, and it is maybe the most discussed issue concerning translation.

In the topic of equivalence a special role has been played by Eugene Nida (1964, 1982; Nida and Taber 1969; Nida and de Waard 1986) is particularly important because in his model he has recognized the non-linguistic specificity of the issue. Of special relevance is his distinction between a formal and dynamic equivalence. While formal equivalence pays attention to the correspondences between form and content, the dynamic one is achieved when in the target language are created the same communicative relations existing between message and receiver in the source language. In this way Nida redefined the concept of fidelity rediscussing the terms of the problem. What is interesting in Nida is that the concept of equivalence has many levels and particularly the 3 levels that Charles Morris developed in his theory of signs: pragmatic, syntactic and semantic.

Nida was a genius, but his perspective reveals what we have called with Berman the ideology of translation in the Western framework. It is present here the idea that the meaning can be saved in the original sense after it has been deprived of its “body”.

Developments in cognitivist studies on the concept of meaning also highlighted that meaning is not something which can travelled unaltered from one language to another. New research which developed inside Cognitive Linguistics have put meaning at the centre of the attention of linguists, re-establishing a tradition which has always considered language in function of meaning and which does not separate that from other aspects of cognition. According to Cognitive Linguistics, linguistic ability is not essentially ascribed to an innate potential but it derives from the interactions and contexts in which linguistic abilities are acquired and developed. Therefore, language cannot be isolated from other cognitive abilities; behind language, there is a wide range of cognitive resources which involves infinite connections and coordinates a lot of information.

The new cognitivist approaches can offer new possibilities to the broad area of studies on translation, above all in the direction to go beyond some of the limits of the discipline. So the explosion of semantics in the cognitive studies and the idea that metaphors structure our world perception can permit us to go beyond these limits and encourage a possible rethinking of translation studies founded on a wider consideration of the kind of facts which are connected with translation. For example concepts like domain, frame, profile, mental spaces, and similarity can be very productive in this area. The distinction between profile-frame and dominion is particularly useful in order to understand the nature of phenomenon such as the semantic differences between words and their apparent equivalent in other languages. Or to understand in which sense synonyms are different. In this case it is useful to cast light upon difficulties of translation that depend on the differences of profiling certain concepts.

Another contribution of cognitivist studies is the fact that the old theory of linguistic relativism has been revisited in the light of the new cognitive research. In this sense, many of the differences which exist between languages derive from

a different way of conceptualising the world. So, just as metaphors imply different conceptualisations, different cultures structure their cognitive universes differently. What implications does this idea have on translation? Are these different conceptualisations compatible or incommensurable? How do we negotiate them? Do we have to force the differences or highlight them?

A response to this series of questions is, as many scholars have done, to go back to Schleiermacher (1993: 153) who wrote there are only two possible options in translation: the translator either leaves the writer well alone and moves the reader towards him, or he leaves the reader well alone and moves the author towards the reader. For example Berman (1984, 1999) is in favor of an approach which highlights the difference, and which therefore moves towards the foreign text.

This refusal of the “annexation” approach can be found also in Henri Meschonnic (1973, 1999) who stresses that usually, faced with the choice of showing the translation for what it is or hiding it, he much rather prefers the second option, and therefore prefers to look for as many devices as possible to obtain a natural sounding effect in the target language.

In line with Schleiermacher is Lawrence Venuti who distinguishes between *domestication* and *foreignization*. Domesticating means creating a translation which tries to avoid giving readers the impression they are reading a foreign text; therefore a fluid and transparent style is adopted. Foreignizing means deliberately violating the rules of the target language, and therefore the translator highlights the source of the text clearly identifying the source language and culture, in order to maintain some of this diversity.

7 Conclusion

Translation is a special experience. Using the word experience means that translation does not concern an object or a relation among objects. This is a crucial point because it has consequences for the theory and practice of translation. A lot of thoughts on translation concentrate on entities such as a single concept or words, on their equivalent in different languages, or on the relations of the translated text, for example with the original, with other environments of destinations, with receptors, etc. These entities are like objects that are studied “per se” or in relation to other objects. Totally different is the perspective if we consider translation as experience.

If instead we think of translation as an experience, it concerns a process and not a series of objects. It is something which is done during this process and which transforms the surrounding environment. The act of translating creates a new text but in a certain way it also changes the departing text, highlighting certain aspects and values. As a matter of fact, a text is already a diverse plurality, it's the product of other texts, of other “originals”. Therefore the chronological connection between

the source and translated text is not the most important; what matters is a sense of reciprocate debt, and for this reason, speaking of equivalence makes no sense. Translation foresees the incessant movement of texts, it is not about static relationships but dynamic ones.

Thus, traditional categories through which we have tried to describe translation, such as equivalence, faithfulness, comparison, etc. referring to products are not enough to appreciate the movement of meaning generated through the act of translation.

Translation is also characterised by two aspects: Similarities and Differences.

Similarity

Umberto Eco (2003a) has written that he would like to define translation as: to say the same thing but he concludes correctly that this is impossible. At the most, he adds, translation means to say almost the same thing. Therefore, as Eco says, it is necessary to understand how “even knowing that we are not saying the same thing, it is possible to say nearly the same thing” (Eco 2003: 9–10).

But also this softened definition doesn’t find the agreement of all.

I think that Eco’s definition should be integrated with the concept of similarity.

In the field of Translation Studies, it was Andrew Chesterman (1996, 2007) who suggested substituting the concept of equivalence with that of similarity, observing that there are at least two types of similarities: a converging and diverging one. The first is when similarity is reciprocate: e.g., two sisters who look similar; the second is the one for which a thing is similar to another (A is similar to B) but B is not similar to A: we can say that a daughter looks like her mother, but it would be strange to say that a mother looks like her daughter because in a chronological sense this would be false. These two different types of similarity are also the ways in which the translator and the reader consider translation. While a translator sees it as a kind of diverging similarity, the second sees it as a converging similarity.

To define similarity in a way that can be helpful for translation we can adopt a semiotic perspective. It is possible to say that there is similarity between two expressions if there is someone who guarantees and stipulates it.

Peirce writes that an interpreter, (who translates orally) is: “Who says that a foreigner says the same thing which he himself says” (CP 1.553, 1867). The difference is clear: Peirce doesn’t know if the the interpreter or the translator says the same thing of the foreigner, he knows only that the translator claims to say to say the same thing and we have to trust that it is true. Eco’s perspective has two speech acts and their similarity, which is, so to speak, a matter of fact. In Peirce’s version, on the contrary, it is possible the similarity between two speech acts if there is someone that guarantees it. This second perspective connects a quality (similarity) with two speech acts thanks to a norm. The similarity in this case is the presupposition of a relation, not the relation. Also in this case, we understand how the norms of similarity can change because they depend on a cultural context, on values and

ideologies which circulate in a certain period of time, and which in some way modify the type of guarantor ruling upon the degree of similarity.

Difference

Similarity is not sufficient. There are many other texts that have many kinds of similarities. In fact we cannot speak of translation between two texts if there is not also a specific kind of difference. The most obvious example is that the first text is in one language and the second in another. But what is the specific feature of the difference which manifests itself in translation?

This is less banal than it seems. If similarity can be establishing solely from an external measurer, the differences do not only concern the relationships between texts, but especially those between cultures in which texts circulate. It is useful to quote Eco again. After having stated that translating could mean “nearly saying the same thing” he adds that once this definition has been given, it is necessary to understand what that “nearly” means.

In fact, in what sense do we “nearly say the same thing”? There are those who say that that “nearly” is sufficient to consider a text a translation and not a completely different text. Obviously an objective criteria seems impossible – we said that throughout history, texts that we would now consider to be translations were considered independent texts and vice versa. Or when Eliot’s *X* quartet translates entire texts of Juan de la Cruz, is this translation or an independent text? Eco again:

How flexible is that “nearly”? Establishing flexibility, the extent of the “nearly”, depends on certain criteria which is to be negotiated in advance. To say “nearly” the same thing is a procedure which is at the basis of negotiation (Eco 2003: 10).

But what is the matter that has to be negotiated? The translator besides negotiate the texts has also to think about the possible mutual prejudices, and these are not linguistics issues but more generally cultural issues. If the linguistic code difference shows itself as a barrier of intelligibility, the cultural difference shows itself as a barrier of acceptability and confidence.

In other words, the difference in translation has many semiotics levels which implies an incessant work of mediation (Chesterman 2003, s.p.).

The concept of mediation introduces an important aspect on which I would like to end. Mediation is a form of communication which is necessary to manage conflict, it foresees differences and provides solutions of the differences through a negotiation carried out on behalf of a mediator. It is a process in which there is a change in the behaviour of the parties involved which can be explained only with the intervention of a mediator (Greco 2011). If we think of translation as mediation and the translation as a mediator, we can interpret the translation process as a real process of argumentation in which the two speakers are not physical people but two cultures confronting each other (see Rigotti and Greco 2005) in which the two parties are subjected to a relationship which could also be a conflictual one (Baker

2006). Therefore translation is an epic role, it becomes the place in which these conflicts try to find a solution, in which cultures do not clash but attempt to communicate (see also Pym 2012: 143 sgg).

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Raphael Berthele

22 Multilingual communication

Abstract: Verbal communication involving more than one language is widespread, both historically and geographically. This chapter provides an overview of multilingual ‘regimes’ of communication, covering different phenomena such as lingua franca communication or receptive multilingualism. The chapter discusses the consequences of multilingual language use as an institutionalized pattern for individual speakers’ linguistic repertoires (e.g., learner varieties in a second language) as well as the consequences of individual multilingualism for collective patterns (e.g., language change due to language contact). Furthermore, research on the consequences that bi- and multilingualism can have on cognition is discussed, covering issues such as the potential impact of bilingualism on intelligence, on cognitive control, and the assumed influence of using a particular language on speakers’ ‘views of the world’. This latter topic is an important part in the ideological underpinnings of current language policies. Thus, in the concluding sections of the chapter, ideological and evaluative components of multilingual language policies are discussed.

Keywords: multilingualism, bilingualism, language policy, language contact, language ideologies, cognition

1 Basic concepts, frameworks and scope of the chapter

In the present chapter, the term *multilingual communication* is used as a cover term for communication involving the use of two or more languages or linguistic varieties. Correspondingly, *multilingualism* is used as a term covering both the collective and individual usage of two or more languages. Multilingual communication can therefore refer to institutional settings in which multilingualism is a characteristic of the collective verbal behavior without necessarily involving individual multilingualism of all actors involved.

1.1 Multilingual communication regimes

Settings where multilingual communication is a part of the makeup can vary considerably. The different regimes can involve widespread individual multilingualism or on the contrary they can entail large-scale individual monolingualism. In the latter case, intergroup communication crucially depends on the multilingual profi-

ciency of a few (e.g., translators and interpreters). The distinction between the individual repertoires and the collective or institutional status of more than one language is crucial, since the term multilingualism is deceitfully ambiguous with respect to the two levels of analysis.

In institutionally multilingual settings, there are different regimes involving individual multilingualism of varying degrees (Grin 2004; Spolsky 2004). On one extreme, one language can be selected for communication among linguistically heterogeneous participants. Typically, *lingua franca* regimes (as in the international scientific domain with English) belong to this category: They involve the learning of the *lingua franca* by speakers of other languages. If the *lingua franca* is a mixed or artificial language (e.g., Esperanto), all participants in the communicative processes have to learn the language to some extent. Regimes involving only one common language are often perceived as a threat to diversity on the institutional level (House 2003a), since they involve the usage of only one strong and dominant language by speakers of various languages.

At the other extreme of the scale, all languages that are considered legitimate in a given context can be used for communication. A prime example is the European Union with currently 23 official languages that theoretically share the same status (see section 3.2). The translation and interpretation apparatus grows exponentially with the number of translation directions needed. Finally, an alternative that does not require individuals to develop language production skills in several languages is the regime of receptive multilingualism (ten Thije & Zeevaert 2007) which allows for massive asymmetries in comprehension and production in the participants. Some examples are inter-Scandinavian communication (Braunmüller 2002, 2007), Romance intercomprehension (Blanche-Benveniste & Valli 1997), mutual comprehension in communication between speakers of Turkish and Kazakh (Massakowa & Rehbein forthcoming) or at the Dutch-German border (Beerkens 2010). This type of regime bears the potential to allow for linguistic diversity on the collective/institutional level without excessive needs for investments in the development of translation, interpretation and productive foreign language proficiency.

However superficial and incomplete this overview of possible regimes may be, it illustrates that multilingual communication as an overarching term covers very different arrangements and relates to very different cognitive and linguistic configurations. Probably the only common denominator to virtually all instances of multilingual communication is a certain asymmetry of proficiency or skills of the different actors in the codes that are used. This asymmetry is often referred to as 'exolingual mode' (Lüdi & Py 2003), as opposed to endolingual communication among speakers with very similar linguistic repertoires. In the extreme cases of receptive multilingualism, individuals may possess comprehension skills in the language of their interlocutors while completely lacking the ability to produce even the most basic oral or written utterances and texts in these languages.

1.2 History

Archeological evidence strongly suggests that cultural and linguistic diversity rather than homogeneity are the default human condition, even in alleged isolated contexts (on multicultural Japan see e.g., Denoon & McCormack 2001). Both early and contemporary contact linguistics (Schuchardt & Spitzer 1922: 132; Matras 2009) provide convincing evidence for ubiquitous contact phenomena in virtually all languages and thus the more or less mixed nature of most human languages. Since the locus of language contact is the bi- or multilingual individual (Weinreich 1953), traces of language contact and language mixing are evidence for individual multilingualism and hence for multilingual communication. Such contact settings can be relatively stable over time, they can also be caused by continuous migration flows, by catastrophic events (wars, natural disasters, etc.) involving rapid shifts of language and culture.

In medieval Europe, multilingual practices have been reported from many different contexts (Von Moos 2008; Kleinhenz & Busby 2010), one of the most important and well-documented of which is probably the so called “School of Toledo” (Pym 1994), where seminal works from Greek and other authors were translated into Latin and Romance from the 12th century onwards. Multilingual institutions and states were and are by no means exceptional (see Rindler-Schjerve 2007 on the Habsburgian monarchy), and similar questions and problems had to be addressed in the past as those that are discussed in present-day national and supra-national institutions. In the political, economic and scientific realms, a tendency towards lingua franca regimes can be observed: Greek as the language of science in Classical Antiquity, Latin in the European Middle Ages, Arabic in medieval Asia, Northern Africa and South-Western Europe, classical Chinese in East Asia, Low German as the trade language in the Hanseatic League, etc.

1.3 Scope of this chapter

In the following discussion of cognitive, social and institutional (‘applied’) issues that are related to multilingual communication, the point of departure is the multilingual individual. Our main goal is to articulate the scholarly investigation of individual multilingual repertoires (2.1) with more general issues from the cognitive (2.2) and social domains (3).

A number of important problems and disciplines directly related to multilingual communication can only be touched upon in a superficial manner. Due to space restrictions, I am unable to provide in-depth discussions of economic, historical and social change, globalization and creolization, and their impact on the language markets (see e.g., Blommaert 2010). Furthermore, the tension between multilingualism and monolingualism in (European) nation-building will only be alluded to and not discussed in detail, as is the case for the related field of studies of language ideologies (Kroskrity 2000; May 2001).

2 Cognitive and linguistic aspects

The reference point of this chapter is the multilingual individual and her/his patterns of verbal behavior. Cognition, linguistic repertoires and language usage are inseparable. Communicative competence can best be modeled in an approach integrating the cognitive and social constraints on verbal usage patterns. In this section, we distinguish between three types of cognitive aspects of multilingual communication: 1. consequences for the individuals' usage patterns of language, 2. consequences for 'languages' in the sense of emerging collective verbal usage patterns, and 3. consequences of multilingualism on non-linguistic cognition.

2.1 Linguistic aspects of multilingual communication

2.1.1 Emergence of learner languages

Multilingual communication typically entails the unbalanced distribution of proficiency among the language users engaged in the communicative practices. Thus, the dynamics of the emergence of second (M. H. Long & Doughty 2004) and additional (de Angelis 2007) language learning processes are relevant factors shaping the respective linguistic repertoires as well as the practices themselves. Learner languages are generally understood as relatively ephemeral but nevertheless systematic systems ('interlanguages', see Selinker 1992). Their internal logic can be modeled by taking into account the dominant (or native) language, the language to be learnt/acquired, general principles of the emergence of linguistic systems (cf. Klein & Perdue 1997) and factors such as time and type of exposure, among others. Despite their dynamic nature, learner languages have been observed to stagnate at typical points in the development ('fossilization'). Potential reasons for such stagnation vary from the absence of normative pressure on the individuals over lack of learning opportunities to outright conscious refusal to learn a particular aspect of the target language. In contemporary approaches, this assumed absence of development is reframed as an attractor state (de Bot, Lowie & Verspoor 2007) within a complex system. Learner languages exhibit to differing degrees features such as overgeneralization, regularization, and simplification of grammatical aspects of the target language.

Multilinguals often have asymmetric proficiency profiles: They are able to understand much more than they can actively produce in the target language, most importantly by applying different types of inferencing strategies (cf. Berthele 2011b). Such strategies are particularly crucial for successful communication in a regime of receptive multilingualism. Participants in multilingual communication tend to adapt their speaking style even in their dominant languages towards so-called teacher or foreigner talk, involving typical patterns of slower speech rate,

simplification of syntax and use of high-frequency vocabulary (D. H. Long & Porter 1985; Howard, Ó'Laoire & Singleton 2011).

2.1.2 Lingua Franca communication

In Lingua Franca regimes, speakers of the international language are clearly distinct from so called 'native speakers' (Davies 2003) of the respective language. Today, obviously, English serves as lingua franca in many areas, contexts and use domains (see next section on global English). Other lingue franche have existed and still exist, e.g., Latin in the European middle ages (cf. Wilton 2012), the 'original' Mediterranean lingua franca (Dakhli 2008), or Swahili in Eastern Africa. In interaction among native and lingua franca speakers of a language, the imbalance in proficiency is often thought to be a source of misunderstandings, giving advantages to the native speakers of the language. This assumption gives rise to debates about linguistic justice (Van Parijs 2002). However, although it is in the very nature of multilingual communication to be exolingual, one must not jump to the conclusion that this necessarily entails an abnormal amount of communicative barriers or misunderstandings. Even mono- and endolingual communication is vulnerable to misunderstandings, and successful mutual comprehension is sometimes regarded as the exception by linguists (Culioli 1991). Moreover, as multilinguals are aware of the specific nature of multilingual communication, they tend to use communication strategies that compensate for these anticipated problems. On the one hand, a commonly applied strategy is to "let it pass" (Firth 1996: 243), i.e. to ignore an item that was unknown or unintelligible to the hearer while hoping things become clearer as the interaction progresses. On the other hand, researchers observed all kinds of interactional devices that ensure that a satisfactory level of comprehension is achieved. As Haegeman (2002) has shown, the speakers in lingua franca exchanges do in fact take into account their interlocutors' actual or perceived lack of proficiency and adapt their styles accordingly (cf. Bremer 1996). More specifically, studies on lingua franca communication from very different contexts have investigated the use of strategies such as back-channeling (Meierkord 1998), the joint construction of stretches of discourse (Firth 1990), the use of canonical patterns such as summons-answer sequences in telephone conversations (Rasmussen 2000), etc. Many authors claim that the widespread use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) leads to the emergence of new varieties of English (see next section).

2.1.3 English as a global language

The role of English as a global language in multilingual communication is manifold. Depending on the norms or ideologies applied, the attitudes vary greatly. In

the language policy literature, English is currently considered one or more than one of the following:

1. A 'killer language' responsible of so-called linguistic genocide (Skuttnab-Kangas 2003)
2. A vector of Anglo-Saxon linguistic, cultural and economic (neo-liberal) hegemony (Hagège 2011)
3. Developing into a new global variety of English (ELF) that is noticeably different from English spoken by native speakers
4. Developing into new contact varieties (e.g., Singlish, see below) that are noticeably different from English spoken by native speakers while at the same time acquiring new native speakers
5. As an important repertoire component in multilingual contexts of bricolage or languaging

I will briefly comment on points 3 to 5 on the previous list, since these are the points immediately related to multilingualism in communication.

English is the most often learnt foreign language in Europe (European Commission 2013) and worldwide (Crystal 2003: 106). English has more nonnative speakers than native speakers.

Global English has been described either in neutral or in dismissive terms ("Globish") as a simplified variant of native English (whatever the centre of the language may be, British or American, or any other place where English is a native and legitimate language). Many scholars have attempted to describe features of ELF as a variety and of ELF interaction (e.g., Jenkins 2012; Haegemann 2002; Meierkord 1998; Seidlhofer 2011; Wright 2007). Aspects of pronunciation (e.g., phonological simplification), grammar (e.g., regularization and simplification of morphology), lexis (e.g., lack of metaphor, lexical simplicity), and collocations have been listed as typical features of ELF.

In this perspective, the use of English as a global language in international and transnational settings gives rise to a new bundle of varieties of English, ELF, with their own linguistic attributes and conversational norms. Some scholars claim that ELF could or should be taught in foreign language classrooms (Jenkins 2012). Other scholars have observed, in opposition to the linguistic justice perspective taken by van Parijs 2002, that native speakers of English who are not proficient in ELF run the risk of not making themselves understood in ELF contexts and are therefore disadvantaged (Wright 2009: 105).

If the mix of dominant or native languages of ELF speakers in a given setting is stable over a longer stretch of time, the emergence of new varieties of English is a plausible scenario. Singlish, i.e. colloquial Singapore English (Deterding 2007: 6), could be seen as an example of such a process leading to the formation of a new variety or language. If this formation of new varieties should become a widespread phenomenon, and provided these varieties gain social and political recognition,

this would justify at least one component of the so-called “Latin analogy” (Wilton 2012), namely that the success of a global language ultimately entails its fragmentation into ‘daughter languages’ (see also Schreier 2010 on lesser-known varieties of English). There is no doubt that new varieties of English in fact emerge in many places of the world. However, this new form of linguistic diversity is rarely recognized, since it rivals with Eurocentric ideas of what a language (and what a dialect) is, namely an ‘old’ form of speaking and writing, with an important corpus of historical written texts, a history of codification and corpus planning including institutions that are legitimized to set norms, and often a nation as the ‘homeland’ of the language. However, neither do most non-European languages correspond to this stereotype, nor newly emerging varieties in contact with English. It is therefore an open question whether this new form of linguistic diversity will ever be recognized as emerging new languages. For example, Singlish with its estimated several hundred thousand speakers does not have an entry in the database that is one of the main resources for the documentation of linguistic diversity worldwide (ethnologue.org, see Gordon 2005), whereas there is an entry for Cornish that is estimated to have zero native speakers.

In another perspective, related to the communication strategies described in the previous section, English in multilingual contexts is not construed as an emerging language or as triggering the birth of new contact varieties, but rather as a way of interaction in linguistically diverse contexts. Within this last perspective, the main emphasis is not put on the often problematic attempt to identify new (or old, for that matter) varieties of English or ELF, but rather on the dynamic, creative ways multilinguals use linguistic and other cues in multilingual interaction, even if their command of English or any other foreign language is very limited (e.g., Shohamy 2006: 64). The focus on language is thus replaced by a focus on languaging, i.e. on patterns of use of one or several languages (including, e.g., code-switching between languages) in context, inspired by sociocultural theories (cf. Shohamy 2006: 14; cf. also Swain et al. 2010 on the role of languaging in second language education). In this perspective, global English is but one, although an important, component of a multilingual and multimodal repertoire of semiotic tools serving to convey and construct meaning in interaction.

Finally, from the point of view of the emerging field of receptive multilingualism, i.e. the more or less exclusive focus on language comprehension in the perspective of fostering the polyglot dialogue (cf. Posner 1991), English as the most widespread and often best mastered foreign language becomes an important supplier language in comprehension of genealogically related languages such as German, Swedish or Dutch (cf. Peyer et al. 2010).

2.1.4 Emergence of collective usage patterns

There are multiple linguistic consequences of multilingual communication on collective usage patterns (‘languages’ or more generally ‘varieties’). The sub-disci-

pline that systematically investigates these consequences, contact linguistics (Thomason 2001; Matras 2009), has provided extensive documentation of various multilingual configurations and their impact on linguistic codes both on the individual and collective levels. Very generally speaking, language contact phenomena can be analyzed using two broad categories, pattern replication and matter replication (Matras 2009). A typical example of matter replication is the borrowing of words from a foreign language. This type of borrowing is so pervasive that it is considered a phenomenon that occurs even in relatively monolingual settings with only casual contact. Pattern replication, on the other hand, involves structural changes in a language that are calqued onto the model of another language (e.g., replicating a language's word order or other aspects of its grammar, but also changing the meaning of words according to the influencing language's model). Even in very proficient bilinguals, such converging patterns can be observed (cf. Pavlenko & Jarvis 2002; Backus, Seza Doğruöz & Heine 2011; Berthele 2012).

In contexts of language shift, e.g., when speakers of a minority language shift towards the use of the majority language during adulthood, structural changes in the newly adopted language can be observed and interpreted as influence from the substratum, i.e. the language that is abandoned by the group: Sometimes these changes involve pattern replication alone, sometimes they involve the replication of patterns and of matter at the same time. Many authors have proposed borrowing scales that relate the probability of certain contact phenomena to the intensity of contact or to other ecological features of the multilingual setting (see Thomason 2001).

Finally, in particular contexts, mixed languages can emerge (Matras 2009: 288). Whereas the status of Creole languages as mixed languages is controversial (Mufwene 2006), other cases, such as Michif (Bakker & Papen 1997) or Inner Mbugu (Mous 2003) are commonly regarded of languages that cannot be attributed to one single phylogenetic branch.

2.2 Impact of multilingual language use on cognition

2.2.1 Intelligence and cognitive control

There is a substantial body of research on the impact of multilingualism on cognition. Whereas early studies (e.g., Saer 1923) suggested a negative impact of bilingualism on cognitive skills and most prominently intelligence, later examination of these studies showed that the results were mere artifacts of lack of methodological rigor and especially lack of control for important factors such as socio-economic background of the participants. After a period of mixed results, Peal and Lambert's seminal 1962 study ushered in an era of research on the impact of bilingualism on non-verbal and verbal intelligence, creativity (e.g., Hommel, Colzato, Fischer & Christoffels 2011), and cognitive control (e.g., Bialystok 2007). Not all studies show

a positive patterning of bilingualism with all these aspects. Indeed, a negative impact is hypothesized in some cases, e.g., convergent thinking or creativity (Hommel, Colzato, Fischer & Christoffels 2011). Overall the effects vary considerably across studies from small to medium-sized effects (cf. Adesope, Lavin, Thompson & Ungerleider 2010 for a meta-analysis). In some studies, bilingualism and multilingualism have been related to the slowing down of the onset of memory problems that are due to Alzheimer type dementia (Chertkow, et al. 2010). To sum up, it seems uncontroversial that bilingualism has no negative impact on cognitive processing overall, and that in some areas such as executive control there seems to be an increase due to bilingualism. Especially in the case of correlations with intelligence the direction of causality between language proficiency and cognition still is an open question. However, as Edwards (2006), points out, the most relevant aspect of bilingualism is the simple fact that bilinguals expand their linguistic repertoire and thus develop a heightened sensitivity to linguistic aspects of communication and culture. Evidence from third language acquisition shows that bilinguals and multilinguals are often able to mobilize language-specific and metalinguistic skills that allow them to add languages to their repertoire with greater ease (de Angelis 2007).

2.2.2 Multilingual language use and linguistic relativity

An important question for research on multilingual communication concerns the connection between language and thought, most commonly labeled by the term of linguistic relativity. Ever since the writings Humboldt, Boas, Sapir and most notably Whorf (1956), the idea of language shaping human thought has given rise to intense discussions in the field of psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics (for a recent overview see Pavlenko 2011). Indeed, experimental evidence has been provided for very specific aspects of conceptualization that seem to be influenced by the speakers' native languages: Spatial frames of reference in language and non-linguistic tasks (Levinson, Kita, Haun & Rasch 2002) and the impact of count vs. mass noun distinction in languages on object categorization (Imai & Gentner 1997; Lucy 2003) are the textbook examples. However, in other areas, evidence for the impact of linguistic systems on non-verbal cognition is controversial or absent. It is thus not surprising that today many authors adopt a rather diluted version of the linguistic relativity hypothesis, merely claiming that there are effects of particular language features that direct the attention of the speaker towards aspects of construed reality while speaking or planning to speak (e.g., the "thinking for speaking" approach by Slobin (1996)). As Pavlenko (2011: 19) points out, this much weaker and non-deterministic version of linguistic relativity is probably also closer to the initial idea found in Whorf's and others' writings, whereas the strong or deterministic version of the hypothesis was an extreme interpretation of the initial idea.

At first, authors working on the question of linguistic relativity focused on monolingual speakers, but meanwhile there is a considerable body of research investigating the impact of two or more languages in the repertoire on cognitive categories and associations. Most of these studies seem to show that patterns of categorizations converge to some extent, or that the 'native' language patterns fade out, as proficiency in a second language increases (see Athanasopoulos (2009) for color categories, Bassetti (2007) for grammatical gender, Brown and Gullberg (2008) for gestures and spatial concepts).

Thus, both on the collective and the individual level, multilingual communication is observed to be linked to converging and accommodating patterns of behavior and of thinking. Linguistic and cognitive convergence can be framed as a natural consequence of situations of multilingual interaction that counteracts the tendency of divergence and 'speciation' observed in the history of languages. Multilingual communication thus is the site where two opposing tendencies of verbal behavior meet: Divergence that has led to significantly different codes even within so-called language families, and convergence that at least partially leads to more similarity of the codes.

3 Social relevance and applied perspectives

The mutual imbrications of the cognitive and linguistic aspects discussed above with social issues are manifold. Most generally, multilingual communication practices give rise to numerous sociologically and legally relevant questions regarding the status of languages, management of linguistic and cultural diversity, and linguistic justice. Moreover, the domain of language learning is concerned, since the nature of multilingual competence and language use call for new pedagogical perspectives on the norms and proficiency levels targeted.

3.1 Multilingual communication and social assessments

Wherever different ways of speaking coexist in social interaction, they are subject to social evaluation. Sociolects (ways of speaking associated with particular social strata), dialects and ethnolects (ways of speaking associated with particular areas and ethnicities respectively) as well as learner languages in multilingual communication convey information about the speaker and are thus potentially assessed by participants in the communicative practice. The cognitive and social predispositions vis-à-vis such variation are investigated within different paradigms of language attitude research (Garrett 2010). Depending on the particular research question investigated, scholars have either focused on behavioral and attitudinal response patterns to particular multilingually marked linguistic varieties (Ramirez &

Milk 1986; Hughes, Shaunessy & Brice 2006; Berthele 2011a) or on the conversational functions of mixed language use (Gumperz 1982; Auer 1995). From a critical sociolinguistic point of view, research on multilingual communication practices is at the core of the investigation of the relationship between language and social or economic power (see e.g., Duchêne & Heller 2012).

3.2 Analyses of language policies

In many areas, in particular in Western Europe, there are important tensions between official declarations of political agencies and actual practices. Whereas the European Union officially celebrates European linguistic and cultural diversity, usage patterns in the European administration clearly converge towards an English as a lingua franca regime. As Koskinen (2000) observed, the expensive and slow translation machinery has mainly a symbolic value and does not serve exclusively communicative goals as such, since people do not trust the quality of the translations and do not have the time to wait for them. Many advocates of linguistic diversity complain about the overwhelming importance English gained in the political, economic, cultural and scientific domains. They often do this by referring to Whorf in a deterministic argument as discussed in section 2.2.2, as e.g., Fishman (1982) or Hagège (2011). In this line of thinking, the diversity of languages equals diversity of ways of conceptualizing reality, which is in turn seen as necessary and valuable for humanity, similarly to biological diversity. However, as has been argued above, research on cognition has not produced convincing evidence for strong effects of linguistic relativity in the deterministic sense, and there is no evidence for increased productivity of creativity in scientific or other institutional text production that would support such claims. Other scholars, such as (House 2003a), argue that lingua franca communication itself is hybrid and multicultural in nature, rather than monolithic and thus homogenizing in a way that supposedly threatens cognitive and cultural diversity. Along the same lines, Blommaert (2010: 195) argues that global English leads to local usage patterns that are again tokens of diversity rather than uniformity. Finally, the Whorfian argument collapses if one tries to combine the case for linguistic diversity in science or other domains with the case for individual bi- or multilingualism, since individual bilingualism weakens the already weak Whorfian effects even further and leads to convergence of cognitive patterns (see 2.2.2). This is not to be seen as an argument against linguistic diversity and in favor of global monolingualism, but as a critique of the inconsistent rationales underlying a good portion of the linguistic diversity discourse.

3.3 Social and discursive framing of mono- and multilingual communication

From an applied point of view, it seems important to pinpoint inconsistencies of national and supra-national language ideologies, to identify potential cultural

models tacitly underlying language policy debates, as Geeraerts' (2003) cultural models. The intensity of the debate on the best regime of multilingual communication appears to be inversely proportional to actually measured linguistic diversity: It is particularly virulent in Western Europe, where linguistic diversity is relatively low, compared to Africa, Asia and the South Pacific (see Gordon 2005). For instance, as Khubchandani (1997) argues, the construal of 'community' in South Asia does not involve the idea of one common language, and multilingual communication within communities is thus nothing exceptional. The 'rediscovery' of multilingual communication, stereotypically linked to globalization, is thus partly due to ill-informed Eurocentrism. One of the main underlying reasons for this rediscovery of diversity in communicative practices is related to the mechanism that produced the erasure of large portions of European diversity in the 18th and 19th century in the first place: European nationalism, on the one hand, due to its tendency of equating a nation with a culture and a language (Anderson 1983; Berthele 2008), created the ideology that de-legitimized the non-dominant languages in European nations (e.g., Breton and all Patois in France, Sorbian in Germany, etc.), therefore contributing significantly to their precarious status. On the other hand, given the increasing importance of English as a global language from the late 20th century on, it is precisely this same nationalism, sometimes disguised as an intercultural argument for diversity, that provides the rationale for the strive for the maintenance of national and international status of languages other than English in the cultural, scientific and economic realms.

Applied research on multilingual communication provides important insights regarding actual practices, but also the potential of multilingual regimes and the particular communication problems that they imply (for examples see Seidlhofer (2011) on *lingue franche*, Truchot (2009) on language choice in the corporate world, ten Thije and Zeevaert (2007) on the regime of receptive multilingualism). The deeper our understanding of the nature of these processes, the better informed institutional choices and regulations will be, e.g., regarding the feasibility of receptive multilingualism as a potentially more just regime in multilingual institutions.

3.4 Multilingual communication and language pedagogy

Lingua franca communication does not necessarily mean that pragmatic and interactional patterns of the native language cultures are erased, as House (2003b) has shown: It is probably more adequate to think of lingua franca communication as a set of idiosyncratic and hybrid linguistic practices with different degrees of convergence towards an idealized model of the respective language. Therefore, on the pedagogical level, the phantasmal target norm of the 'native speaker' in the foreign language classroom will probably gradually be replaced by more realistic and more useful targets such as a proficient speaker of lingua franca English (Seidlhofer 2004) or a proficient 'comprehender' of a language based on knowledge in other

languages. Moreover, research on multilingual language learning should give answers to the question of when and how multilinguals can benefit from pre-acquired language knowledge and how positive transfer across the languages in the multilingual repertoire can be stimulated. Research on multilingual competence puts particular emphasis on transfer across languages (Jarvis & Pavlenko 2007), metalinguistic awareness skills (Jessner 2008), the influence from other foreign languages on communicating in a third or additional language (de Angelis 2007). All these aspects can potentially enrich foreign language teaching practices in the classroom, but the actual practices and their respective effectiveness still need further investigation.

Finally, the growing importance of computer mediated communication poses new problems regarding the potential and the modalities of multilingual communication via the internet (Dabène 2003). Again, the role of English as the 'Web'-language could and should be questioned and issues around automatic online translation seem to be of growing importance as the access to online resources becomes more and more widespread.

4 Concluding remarks

This chapter is an attempt to outline the manifold results produced by research on multilingual communication. These results pertain to individual usage patterns, to the collective emergence of linguistic phenomena related to multilingualism, and to the social meanings and interpretations of these phenomena. Whereas we have argued that the use of multiple linguistic codes in communication is a normal and ubiquitous way of verbal interaction, the political and scientific framing of patterns of multilingual communication varies considerably across space and time. The methods used in the investigation reflect the vastness of the issues involved, and consequently they range from historiography to ethnography to corpus studies and experimental designs. The scientific challenge for the field is to strive for a tighter integration of the individual/cognitive and the collective/social levels of analysis. Eventually, better comprehensive frameworks will allow modeling the dynamics of multilingual communication in an increasingly holistic manner.

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Anna Wierzbicka

23 Two levels of verbal communication, universal and culture-specific

Abstract: The “naïve” (non-scientific) models of the human person embedded in everyday language differ a great deal across languages and often lead us to the heart of the shared cultural values of the speech community in question. Even within Europe the models of the human person embedded in different languages are quite diverse. Remarkably, all human cultures appear to agree that human beings have a body (that people can see) and “something else” (that people can’t see). The construal of this “something else”, however, differs a great deal across languages, cultures, and epochs. For speakers of modern English, this “something else” is usually interpreted as the ‘mind’; and in the era of global English, the model of a human being as composed of a body and a mind is often taken for granted by Anglophone humanities and social sciences (and even by cognitive and evolutionary science). Yet ‘mind’ is a conceptual artefact of modern English – an ethno-construct no more grounded in reality than the French *esprit*, the Danish *sind*, the Russian *duša*, the Latin *anima*, or the Yolngu *birrimbirr*. The reification of the English ‘mind’ and its elevation to the status of a “scientific” prism through which all other languages, cultures, indigenous psychologies, and even stages in the evolution of primates can be legitimately interpreted is a striking illustration of the blind spot in contemporary social science which results from the “invisibility” of English as a more and more globalised way of speaking and thinking. This paper demonstrates that the meanings hidden in such language-specific cultural constructs can be revealed and compared, in a precise and illuminating way, through universal semantic primes brought to light by NSM semantics (cf. e.g., Wierzbicka 2014; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014.) It also shows how the understanding of such culturally central concepts can lead to better communication across languages and cultures.

Keywords: intercultural communication, cross-linguistic semantics, NSM theory, universal human concepts, ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ across languages, cultural keywords and global understanding

1 Two kinds of concepts, universal and culture-specific

There are two levels of verbal communication, because there are two kinds of words: universal and culture-specific. Universal words have simple meanings with

precise counterparts in all, or nearly all languages. Culture-specific words are words whose meanings are complex and shaped by a particular culture and which do not have counterparts outside the circle of that culture. For example, evidence suggests that all languages have words with simple meanings such as ‘someone’, ‘something’, ‘do’, ‘happen’, ‘know’ and ‘see’, but not words corresponding in meaning to *lunch*, *babysitter*, *girlfriend*, *temperature* or *mind*. (See e.g., Goddard and Wierzbicka eds. 2002; Goddard ed. 2008; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014a and b).

In everyday interaction with speakers of one’s own native language one is usually not aware of any fundamental difference between these two types of words. One can become aware of it, however, in special circumstances when meanings need to be clarified: for example, for the benefit of children, or foreigners. Simple and universal meanings such as ‘do’ and ‘happen’, ‘know’ and ‘see’ provide a kind of safety net in human communication. When we need to explain precisely what we mean to someone who doesn’t have full command of our own verbal and conceptual lexicon we often find ourselves falling back on those simple and universal words which constitute the common ground for human understanding and which are more self-explanatory than more complex and more culture-dependent concepts and ideas.

Research conducted by many scholars, over many years, in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework (See NSM Homepage) has brought to light 65 such simple and universal concepts, known as “semantic primes”, and a set of their shared combinatorial properties. The list of the English exponents of these primes, grouped into categories, is given in Table 1. (Comparable tables for many other languages can be found in Goddard and Wierzbicka (eds.) 2002).

Primes exist as the meanings of lexical units (not at the level of lexemes). Exponents of primes may be words, bound morphemes, or phrasemes. They can be formally, i.e. morphologically, complex. They can have combinatorial variants or allolxes (indicated with ~). Each prime has well-specified syntactic (combinatorial) properties.

The acronym NSM comes from the phrase “natural semantic metalanguage”. The idea of a natural semantic metalanguage behind the NSM is that taken together with their shared mini-grammar, the primes provide a neutral, culture-independent metalanguage for articulating meanings and ideas at a level accessible to all human beings. This metalanguage is “natural” because unlike various artificial languages developed by formal semanticists, logicians or specialists in artificial languages, it is carved out of natural languages and, in principle, is intelligible to speakers of any natural language.¹

¹ In addition to universal semantic primes (undecomposable “atoms of meaning”) NSM research has uncovered several dozen universal (or near-universal) “semantic molecules” (Goddard 2010, 2012; Wierzbicka 2011). These molecules are meanings composed of the primes but integrated into units which function as integral parts in the meanings of other, semantically more complex words.

Tab. 1: Semantic primes (English exponents) in comparable categories (cf. Goddard & Wierzbicka 2002, 2014a).

I~ME, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY	Substantives
KIND, PART	Relational substantives
THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE	Determiners
ONE, TWO, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW, SOME, ALL	Quantifiers
GOOD, BAD	Evaluators
BIG, SMALL	Descriptors
THINK, KNOW, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	Mental predicates
SAY, WORDS, TRUE	Speech
DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH	Actions, events, movement, contact
BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING), (IS) MINE	Location, existence, specification, possession
LIVE, DIE	Life and death
WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	Time
WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE	Space
NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	Logical concepts
VERY, MORE	Augmentor, intensifier
LIKE	Similarity

More often than not, however, verbal exchanges in natural settings rely to a very high degree on complex concepts which are shared by the speakers of a particular language and which seem to the interlocutors to be self-explanatory only because they are shared within their own cultural circle and because they are familiar to everyone within that circle.

A good example of a complex and culture-specific concept which is shared by the speakers of one language and which the speakers of this language usually take for granted is the English word *mind*.

Some semantic molecules are highly culture-specific (e.g., 'God', 'money' and 'paper' in English and many other languages), some, however, are universal or near-universal. Examples of the latter include 'man', 'woman', 'child', 'be born', 'water' and 'fire'. The meanings discussed in this paper rely almost exclusively on semantic primes. The only semantic molecule which briefly appears on the scene is 'be born', in the section of "The Yolngu theory of person".

In this chapter, I will reflect on the reliance of speakers of English on the word *mind* as a lens through which to look at the world and on the important role of this word (and the concept linked with it) as a shared coin in the Anglophone economy of communication. Since English speakers' self-understanding depends on the concept of 'mind', they also tend to interpret all other people through this concept, and in doing so, they appear to achieve mutually satisfying communication with other speakers of English.

In what follows, I will argue that such mutually satisfying communication with other speakers of English does not necessarily amount to a genuine understanding of how speakers of other languages think. Further, I will try to show that such genuine cross-linguistic and cross-cultural understanding can only be achieved at the level of communication based on universal concepts – such as 'think', 'know', 'want' and 'feel', and not at the level based on language-specific concepts such as 'mind'.

In addition to being taken for granted and frequently relied on by most speakers of English, the word *mind* appears to have an extraordinary appeal to Anglophone social scientists, and it often features in the titles of their books. To mention just a few examples, including some of my personal favourites: *Culture in Mind* (Bradd Shore 1996), *A Mind So Rare* (Merlin Donald 2001), *The Shared Mind* (ed. by Jordan Zlatev et al. 2008), *The Mind of the Chimpanzee* (ed. Elizabeth Lonsdorf et al. 2010), *Mind* (John Searle 2004), *Bilingual Minds* (Aneta Pavlenko ed. 2006), and so on. This appeal of the word *mind* in social science and popular science is understandable, given the academic and dry aura of the obvious competitor, the Latinate *cognition*. In contrast to the abstract, artificial and lifeless-sounding *cognition*, *mind* sounds concrete, natural and real. When they talk about 'mind', Anglophone scholars appear to be at ease with each other and seemingly with all their fellow human beings. The word appears to place thinking and knowing at the centre of our humanity and to suggest a reverential attitude to these attributes. Even a title like "The Mind of the Chimpanzee" sounds generous and humane, implying as it were a willingness to attribute our best qualities to our fellow primates and to dignify them in this way.

In that climate of understandable admiration for "the mind so rare" (Donald 2001) it is sometimes difficult to remember that in fact 'mind' is an Anglo/English invention and that appealing as it is, it is not one that points to the depths of our shared humanity. In this context, it is interesting to note the title of philosopher Allan Bloom's well-known book *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. The book deplores the fall of *soul* in the English universe of discourse and its virtual displacement by *mind*. Yet the main title itself relies also on the word *mind*: it seems to suggest that the 'American mind' was once open and now is increasingly closed, rather than that in the ethnophilosophy of speakers of English *soul* has been virtually replaced by *mind*. Bloom's choice of the title is hardly surprising: he

may well have felt that in order to connect with his English-speaking and English-thinking readers he had to speak to them in the idiom of ‘mind’, mentioning ‘soul’ only as an element of the background. The fact is that *mind* resonates today with speakers of English and consolidates their *entente* as a community of discourse, whereas *soul* usually does not, or does only in exceptional circumstances.²

Two caveats need to be made at this point. The first one concerns ‘false friends’ (*des faux amis*) – words that are cognate and may share some semantic components but differ significantly in their over-all meaning and cultural significance, such as *mind* (English), *mente* (Italian), and *mens* (Latin), or *spirit* (English), *spiritus* (Latin) and *esprit* (French). The second caveat concerns the wide-spread tendency to treat the cultural descendants of some important common ancestors in a group of languages as semantic equivalents. Nothing illustrates this better than some words in modern European languages which have their source in the conceptual vocabulary of the New Testament or the Psalms, such as the English *soul*, the German *Seele*, the French *âme* and the Polish *duś* – all descendants of the Hebrew *nepesh*, the New Testament Greek *psyche* and the *anima* of the Vulgate.

The lexical successors of those foundational Judeo-Christian words in modern European languages underscore the shared cultural heritage with which these languages are associated – but also the different stamps that particular languages and cultures have put on that common legacy. (Cf. e.g., Wierzbicka 1992, Chapter 1). The great shift from *soul* to *mind* (as the main counterpart of the body) that can be observed in modern English is of particular interest in this context, as is also the subsequent absolutisation of the English *mind* as a keyword of contemporary science, as well as Anglophone social sciences and the humanities.

While I have been reflecting on the Anglo scholars’ love affair with ‘mind’ for over a quarter of a century (cf. e.g., Wierzbicka 1989), two recent seminars, given on two successive days at my home university, have blown fresh life into this topic for me. Thus, on May 28, 2013 Carsten Levisen from Aarhus University in Denmark presented a seminar (“European words re-invented”), in which he discussed semantic diversity of cultural key words across a number of languages, paying special attention to the English word *mind* and emphasizing the fact that *mind* has no exact equivalents in other European languages, or in creoles based on English (a point to which I will return later). Drawing on his own work on the meaning of the word *sind* (which he had explored in depth in his 2012 book: *Cultural Semantics and Social Cognition: A case study on the Danish universe of meaning*), Levisen illustrated the difference between the English *mind* and the Danish *sind* with the example of someone living near the Danish-German border. Other people could ask about such a person: “does he/she have a Danish ‘sind’ or a German ‘sind’?” but not “does he/she have a Danish or a German mind?” To quote from Levisen’s book:

² As I am finalising this section, Australian newspapers report on the trial of a serial rapist, Adrian Bailey, accused recently of assaulting and killing a Melbourne television journalist. The victim’s

The closest Danish counterpart of *mind* is *sind*; they are, however, quite different constructs. The Danish *sind* cannot, like the English *mind*, be described as *inquiring* (knowledge) or *brilliant* (thinking). *Sind* is linked with identity and mentality. To exemplify, one can be *dansk et* ‘of a Danish *sind*’, as opposed to *tysksindet* ‘of a German *sind*’. A *sind* can be described as *lys* ‘light, bright’ or *mørk* ‘dark’ (one’s mental disposition). Unlike *mind*, the Danish *sind* can “move” and “boil” suggesting a feeling aspect. Roughly, we can say that *sind* combines the ideas of a person’s mentality, core identity, and his or her deeper feelings. Compared with the “intellectual” and “flexible” English concept of *mind*, Danish *sind* can be said to present a more “identificational” and “deterministic” construal of personhood. (Levisen 2012: 72)

The second seminar, given jointly by anthropologist Howard Morphy (an eminent authority on Aboriginal art in Australia) and linguist Frances Morphy was devoted to some semantic and cultural aspects of the Australian language Yolngu, and in particular, to what the presenters referred to as “the Yolngu conceptualisation of the mind”. The title of the seminar was “We think through our *morwat* (paintbrush) – conceptualizing mind cross-culturally”. When I queried the justice of looking at Yolngu language and culture through the prism of the English concept of ‘mind’, the presenters defended this approach by appealing to Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblances”. Presumably, the idea was that while not all languages have words for either ‘art’ or ‘mind’, there is enough “family resemblance” between words for “something like art” and “something like mind” across languages to justify the use of the words *art* and *mind* as basic tools in cross-cultural research.

But even if a phrase like “the Yolngu theory of art” is regarded as acceptable, at least as a convenient conceptual shortcut for speakers of English (and of other languages which have a word matching *art* in meaning), phrases like “the Yolngu theory of mind” or “the Yolngu conceptualisation of the mind” are problematic. In the case of art there are some physical objects which can provide a shared focus for cross-cultural discourse, but the subject-matter of the “theory of mind” is inherently invisible and intangible: in this domain more than in most others, construal is everything, and ‘mind’ is an English, not a Yolngu construal. (I will return to this point in the section on Yolngu.)

As discussed by Levisen (in his 2013 seminar and in his 2012 book), within the Danish speech community the concept of ‘sind’ is a shared coin in communication and cognition: speakers of Danish can communicate with one another using this coin (in conjunction with many other similar coins). In the English-speaking world, ‘mind’ is such a shared coin and in the Yolngu community, it is (as we shall see) the word *birrimbirr*. In each linguistic sphere, such shared verbal currency establishes a level of verbal communication which is language- and culture-specific, and

husband is reported as saying at the trial: “I think of the waste of a brilliant mind and a beautiful soul at the hands of a grotesque and soulless human being” (*The Australian*, June 12, 2013, p. v).

which binds speakers of a particular community as members of a single verbal economy.³

But there is another level of verbal communication, which is not language- and culture-specific. It is the level of simple concepts found as matching verbal tokens in any speech community, including speakers of English, Danish and Yolngu, tokens like ‘think’, ‘know’, ‘want’, ‘feel’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’. These simple and universal human concepts can enter in different communities into different configurations and thus become non-convertible items of the local cognitive and communicative currency.

In a recent article on emotions in a cross-cultural perspective the founder of “cultural psychology” Richard Shweder (2012) contrasts “contingent” concepts “packaged” in culture-specific ways in particular human groups from “foundational” or “basic” concepts such as ‘want’, ‘know’, ‘think’, ‘feel’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, declaring himself willing to build interpretive cross-cultural research on the basis of the latter. Referring to the work of the present writer, Shweder (2012: 383) writes:

Informed in part by Anna Wierzbicka’s (1999) corpus of research in which she nominates certain concepts as universally available across all cultural traditions, I am quite willing to conduct interpretive research on cultural differences in human mentalities relying on a theory of mind that presumes that all normal human beings wherever you go in the world want things, know things, feel things, and value things (as good or bad), and think about the things they want, know, feel, and value.

It is interesting to note that Shweder is engaging here at two levels of verbal communication at once. To reach his Anglophone readers, he uses the phrase “a theory of mind”, in relation to all humans. At the same time, he recognises that what is shared by human beings is concepts like ‘want’, ‘know’, ‘think’ and ‘feel’ (as well as ‘good’ and ‘bad’); that is, in effect, he acknowledges the existence of a deeper level of communication at which ‘mind’ is no longer a usable coin.

There can of course be no objection to the use of the phrase “theory of mind” as a convenient abbreviation when writing for Anglophone readers. It is good to remember, however, that this phrase constitutes an English-specific conceptual construct, and not part of the panhuman model of the human person or a legitimate scientific analytical tool for writing about people and peoples across the globe. At that level, only the simple and universal concepts like ‘think’, ‘know’, ‘want’ and ‘feel’ can provide shared stable reference points for verbal (as well as nonverbal) communication and mutual human understanding.

To reiterate the key point, most words don’t match exactly in meaning across language boundaries. This is why the set of 65 semantic primes which do match

³ In some cases, some elements of ‘local currency’ are convertible into the currencies of neighbouring or otherwise closely related countries. For example, the English word *art* is convertible into the languages of other European languages, whereas the word *mind* is not.

exactly can play a key role in human communication as a bedrock of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural understanding. Arguably, this set can also play a key role in the study of human communication, because it provides a common measure for comparing concepts embedded in different languages. The existence of such a common measure is particularly important in relation to cultural key words of particular languages, such as *mind* in modern English, *amae* in Japanese or *Pflicht* in German, which are both untranslatable and vitally important. (For detailed discussion of these words, see Wierzbicka 1997 and 2015).

2 Critics and opponents of the NSM approach

Since all the analyses and illustrations of the two levels of verbal communication that are going to be presented in the following sections are based on the NSM approach, it will be in order to note at the outset that, like other radical scientific theories, NSM theory has its critics and opponents, and to cite at least some relevant names and publications. Two points which deserve to be emphasised in this context are these: first, that the most persistent critics of NSM-based hypotheses and analyses have always been NSM researchers themselves, and second, that for the most part, the opponents of NSM seem to take a defensive stance, along the lines of “I don’t *have* to do what NSM claims *has* to be done”.

To begin with the critics, if the size of the postulated set of semantic primes changed dramatically over the years (from 14 posited in my 1972 *Semantic Primitives*, through 37 in *Semantic and Lexical Universals* (Goddard and Wierzbicka eds. 1994) to 56 in my 1996 *Semantics: Primes and Universals* and 65 in Goddard’s and my 2014 *Words and Meanings*), it was above all in response to challenges from the practitioners of NSM themselves. At the same time, I would like to acknowledge that a significant shift in emphasis – from a search focussed primarily on primes as such to a search focussed equally on primes and their ‘grammar’ – was prompted by a critical (as well as appreciative) review of my 1980 book *Lingua Mentalis* by an outsider: the prominent generative grammarian James McCawley, published in *Language* in 1983.

As for the opponents of NSM, the most constructive challenges have come, over the years, from fieldworkers who claimed that the field language of their expertise didn’t have a lexical exponent for one of the concepts postulated by NSM researchers as universal. For example, Jürgen Bohnemeyer (2003) claimed that Yucatec Maya has no words for BEFORE and AFTER; George Van Driem (2004), that the Himalayan language Nepali has no word for FEEL; Daniel Everett (2005), that the Pirahã language of Amazonia doesn’t have a words for ONE, TWO and ALL; Nicholas Evans (2007), that the Australian language Dalabon doesn’t have exponents of either KNOW or THINK; and Olesya Khanina (2008), that some languages, such as Spanish and Hmong, don’t have an exponent of WANT.

NSM researchers have always pursued such claims with great care, and responded to them with meticulous analyses of the relevant data and arguments. For example, a comprehensive defense of the claims about ONE, TWO, and ALL can be found in Wierzbicka 2005, 2012, and in Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014b; about BEFORE and AFTER, in Goddard 2001 and 2008; about FEEL, in Wierzbicka 1999 and Goddard 2008; about WANT, in Goddard and Wierzbicka (2010); and about KNOW and THINK in Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014b.

It is the hallmark of the NSM approach that it pursues both linguistic universals and linguistic diversity, and in fact insists that the two are inseparable, whereas other approaches tend to oppose these two emphases and to choose one over the other. Thus, some linguists choose to stress linguistic diversity and to reject linguistic universals (cf. e.g., Evans and Levinson 2009), whereas others (for example Ray Jackendoff and Paul Kay) put forward putative universals while rejecting any need for cross-linguistic testing of their universalist hypotheses. Jackendoff (2006) insists the the concept of ‘rights’ (as in “human rights”) is universal in human thinking, dismissing the absence of the word for ‘right/rights’ in most languages of the world as an irrelevancy, whereas Kay and his associates (e.g., Kay and Kuehni 2008) do the same with the concept of ‘colour’. Accordingly, linguists like Everett and Evans criticize NSM research for its insistence on semantic universals (such as ONE, TWO, ALL, KNOW, and THINK), whereas those like Jackendoff and Kay criticise it for its insistence on cross-linguistic grounding of any proposed semantic universals (and for its rejection of culturally shaped notions such as ‘rights’ and ‘colour’ as genuine universals). Both these lines of critique have been met with detailed responses in numerous NSM publications. (For a rebuttal of Jackendoff’s arguments, see, for example, Wierzbicka 2007, and Kay’s, Wierzbicka 2008a, b, 2014a, and in press).

As for seemingly defensive responses to NSM, space doesn’t permit more than a couple of illustrations. Given that NSM objects to the use of scientific jargon and academic English as a metalanguage for explaining how speakers of other languages think and what their meanings are, it has not surprisingly found itself vigorously opposed by “cognitive linguists” such as Dirk Geeraerts and his colleagues who do just that. Since in their own work, these linguists rely heavily on academic English to explain ‘human cognition’ across languages, NSM’s insistence on the exclusive use of simple and cross-translatable words as analytical tools is a challenge to their own methodology. Trying to counter this challenge, Geeraerts and colleagues call NSM a “reductionist approach” and an example of “reductionist thinking”, obviously using the word “reductionist” in a pejorative sense (see e.g., Kristiansen and Geeraerts 2007).

NSM paraphrases of meaning are indeed “reductive” – and NSM researchers have always presented the technique of “reductive paraphrase” as their key method and regarded NSM’s capacity to ‘reduce’ complex meanings to combinations of simple elements as a great strength of the NSM approach, rather than a

weakness and see equating “reductive” and “reductionist” as word play. To quote Goddard (2013: 251):

Although the individual components are simply phrased, NSM explications as a whole are often quite complex; to borrow an expression from Geertz (1973: 44), they are “complex but intelligible”. Geertz was echoing Lévi Strauss’s dictum that analysis does not consist in the reduction of the complex to the simple, but rather in the substitution of the complex but intelligible in place of what was complex and unintelligible. The point is that though phrased in simple, intelligible terms, an NSM explication does not in any sense reduce the semantic complexity of the original expression. Rather, it articulates the complexity: it shows what the complexity consists of.

As a second example of ‘defensive’ opposition to NSM I will adduce to work of the Nijmegen School of Cognitive Anthropology, as represented by Asifa Majid, whose critique of NSM is discussed in detail in my 2014 book *Imprisoned in English*. Very briefly, in her critique of NSM, Majid (2010) defends extensionist approaches to semantics which rely heavily on ‘visual’ approaches to meaning analysis, such as photographs, pictures, video clips, and the like. In my view, nothing can illustrate the poverty of such methods as ways of accessing meanings and ideas better than the domain analysed cross-linguistically in the present chapter. Since ‘souls’ (and ‘minds’) are invisible by definition, presumably not even the most committed adherent of extensionist semantics would propose to study them (and ethno-psychology and ethno-philosophy in general) through video clips and similar. By contrast, the NSM approach is equally applicable to ‘concrete’ domains such as ethnobiology, ethnogeography or ‘ethno-technology’ as to ‘inner’ domains such as the study of emotions, values, ‘minds’ and ‘souls’, and has been applied, in numerous studies, to all these domains.

On the whole, it would be fair to say that the strongest support for the NSM approach to languages has often been voiced in disciplines adjacent to linguistics, such as anthropology (D’Andrade 2001), cultural psychology (Shweder 2004), evolutionary science (Jones 1999, Fabrega 2013), psychology (Harré and Moghaddam 2012) and semiotics (Eco 1999), as discussed in detail in the chapter “Kindred thinking across disciplines” in my *Imprisoned in English*. To adduce just one brief quote here, D’Andrade (2001: 246) characterizes NSM as “[a] simple, clear, universal semantic metalanguage, a language made up of the ordinary little words that everyone knows. ... a potential means to ground all complex concepts in ordinary language and translate concepts from one language to another without loss or distortion in meaning”.

As one critic put it, NSM has “impossibly high standards”, and those linguists who oppose it tend to be disputing (in self-defense?) the need for such standards. As Asifa Majid (2010: 63–64) from the Nijmegen group characteristically put it in relation to one key methodological requirement of NSM, “this insistence ... comes only from practitioners of NSM; it is not a generally accepted requirement”. This is correct – and consistent with the general observation about NSM’s “impossibly” high standards.

I would like to conclude this section with two quotes, one from an insider and one from a critic. Thus, Goddard (2008: 1), writes: “The NSM approach remains controversial: many linguists have either a “love it” or “hate it” attitude towards it. Nonetheless, on objective criteria (longevity, range, publication outputs) it is indisputable that NSM is one of the most well developed, productive, and comprehensive systems of semantic analysis in contemporary linguistics.” Evans (2010: 516–517), in effect, agrees: “NSM practitioners have produced a vast body of semantic analyses across dozens of languages, and at present can lay claim to having developed the approach that has gone deepest into the possibilities of setting up a cross-linguistically valid set of basic semantic categories in which all meanings can be stated (...).” (The end of the sentence, which I am omitting here, reiterates Evans’ doubts about KNOW and THINK in Dalabon and WANT in another Australian language, Kayardild.)

3 The modern English concept of ‘mind’ and the Trinidad Creole ‘mine’

In my 1992 study of the English concept of ‘mind’ I wrote (see also Wierzbicka 1989):

The idea that *mind* is a folk concept reflected in the English language rather than an objective and universally valid category of human thought may seem surprising, if not impertinent. It is relatively easy to see that concepts such as those encoded in the Japanese words *kokoro* or *ki* (Lock 1984), in the Samoan word *loto* (Gerber 1985), or in the Ilongot word *rinawa* (Rosaldo 1980) are culture-specific. It is harder to realise, however, that the same applies to the concept encoded in the English word *mind*. Titles of scholarly articles, books, and chapters, such as “A folk model of the mind” (D’Andrade 1987) or “Western concepts of the mind from the Greek to the nineteenth century” (Murphy and Murphy 1969), reflect, I think, this error of perspective. They illustrate the familiar problem of the reification of essentially Western ethnopsychological categories that are then taken as the conceptual foundation of scientific inquiry.

In the course of that discussion of the English ‘mind’, I compared the English ethnopsychology of a person based on the folk concept of ‘mind’ with the German ethnopsychology based on two key words: *Geist* (usually translated into English as either ‘mind’ or ‘spirit’) and *Seele* (sometimes translated into English as ‘soul’ and sometimes as ‘mind’). Discussing the differences between the two ethnopsychologies, the Anglo/English one and the German one, I noted in particular the far-reaching consequences that they are believed to have had for the reception and interpretation of Freud’s doctrines in the English-speaking world, and I quoted Bruno Bettelheim’s (1983: 70) book *Freud and Man’s Soul*:

Of all the mistranslations of Freud’s phraseology, none has hampered our understanding of his humanist views more than the elimination of his references to the soul (*die Seele*). Freud

evokes the image of the soul quite frequently – especially in crucial passages where he is attempting to provide a broad view of his system ... Unfortunately, even in these crucial passages the translations make us believe that he is talking about our mind, our intellect. (1983: 70)

Looking at the English word *mind* in a historical perspective, I noted some revealing semantic changes, evidently related to changing ways of thinking in the English-speaking world. Thus, I suggested that “the older English mind seemed to be linked with values, whereas the modern one is morally neutral. Consequently, the innumerable references to a ‘noble mind’, ‘ignoble mind’, ‘innocent mind’, or ‘generous mind’ in older English literature sound a little strange and archaic to the modern ear”. I also noted that “the older mind had both a spiritual and a psychological dimension and did not have the predominantly intellectual orientation which it has now, with thinking and knowing dominating any other non-bodily aspects of a person’s inner life” (Wierzbicka 1992: 45). In conclusion, I “translated” the modern English concept of ‘mind’ into universal human concepts in the following explication:

mind (1992/1989)

one of two parts of a person

one cannot see it

because of this part, a person can think and know

In the course of the intervening two decades, both the lexicon and the syntax of the natural semantic metalanguage have been perfected, and a 2014 explication would look different from the 1992 and 1989 ones, but the references to two parts of a person and to thinking and knowing would be preserved:

someone’s mind (2014)

something

this something is part of this someone

people can’t see this something

this something is not part of this someone’s body

when this someone is thinking about something

something happens in this part

because this someone has this part, it is like this:

this someone can think many things about many things

this someone can know many things about many things

As mentioned earlier, in his recent seminar at the Australian National University, Carsten Levisen discussed the meanings of some important words in various creoles based on European languages, and in particular talked about the meaning of the word *mine* (from the English *mind*) in the Trinidad Creole, or “Trini” (as the language is locally called). In the abstract for his seminar, Levisen (2013) wrote (see also Levisen and Jogie in press; Levisen in press):

Word meanings do not emerge in a vacuum. They are revealing of speakers' value systems and the sociopolitical logics under which they emerged. Colonial European languages, such as English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese, and to a lesser extent German and Danish, have left a decisive mark on the world's languages. Yet sometimes the meanings of European words have been reinvented outside of the European context, most dramatically so in creole-speaking communities.

So what exactly does the word *mine* mean in Trinidad English, and what can this 'reinvented' European word teach us? Levisen did not provide a full explication of *mine* (a word which he is still exploring), but he noted that a 'good mine' does not mean in "Trini" what a 'good mind' means in English. In English if someone has a 'good mind', this implies, roughly speaking, that this someone is good at thinking, and also at acquiring knowledge. Someone with a "good mind" wants to know many things, wants to think about what he or she knows, and can think about it well. Whatever the fine details of the meaning of the phrase 'a good mind' might be, the focus on 'thinking' and 'knowing' seems indisputable. In "Trini", on the other hand, a person with a "good *mine*" is, above all, a good person. Thus, while a full semantic portrait of the word 'mine' awaits further exploration, it seems clear that both the construal of the human person and the central cultural concerns reflected in *mine* are different from those reflected in the (modern) English *mind*.

From a modern Anglo/English cultural perspective, a person can be seen as composed of a visible part (the body) and an invisible one (the mind) which enables the person to think and know. From a Trinidadian perspective, on the other hand, a person is seen as composed of a visible part (the body) and an invisible one (the *mine*) which enables this person to be a good person. These are two different "theories" of the human person. It seems clear that to speak of a "Trinidadian theory of mind" would be like speaking of an "Anglo/English theory of mine", and that while the latter may seem odd to speakers of English and the former, natural, in fact both are equally problematic.

Thirty years ago anthropologist Catherine Lutz (1985) asked provocatively (in the title of a well-known paper), "Ethnopsychology compared to what?". Lutz' main focus was on emotions and on the tendency of Anglophone psychology to reify and absolutize English emotion terms. But clearly, what applies to emotions applies also to personhood: it makes good sense to ask how local conceptions of human person differ across languages and cultures but not how local conceptions of the mind do: like 'mine', 'mind' itself is one of those local (if now globally spreading) conceptions.

Essentially, this point was made many times before – in relation to the Russian *duša* (e.g., Wierzbicka 1992; Gladkova 2009), the Korean *maum* (Yoon 2006), the Malay *hati* (Goddard 2008b), and so on. But it is particularly striking to see how the English word *mind* itself can be reinvented and imbued with a new meaning, and a new ethno-psychology and ethno-philosophy. Perhaps Levisen's observations about this Trinidadian re-invention of the English 'mind' will help to finally

achieve what the earlier studies of concepts like *duša*, *maum* or *hati* seemingly failed to achieve: to de-naturalize the English word *mind* and to unseat it from its undeservedly privileged place at the heart of the Anglophone psychology, philosophy, and anthropology of the person.

4 The “theory of person” in late Latin (as evidenced in St Augustine’s *Confessions*)

An interesting example of a folk model of the person (inevitably lost in translation) is provided in St Augustine’s *Confessions*. A modern Anglo reader may well say that this book is an extended study of the author’s inner self, and the word *self* – as well as *mind* – often appears in various English translations of this late Latin masterpiece. But there was no ‘self’ in St Augustine’s Latin, and neither was there a ‘mind’. Instead, the key concept on which St Augustine relied was that embedded in the word *anima*.

Before proceeding with my analysis of this concept I must make three important points. First, I will be talking here about the use of the word *anima* (usually translated into English as ‘soul’) by one particular author (St Augustine), and in one particular work (his *Confessions*), and not about the use of this word in classical, or post-classical, Latin in general. Second, I am not interested in St Augustine’s views about ‘anima’, but only in how he actually used this word. Third, I will try to distinguish his use of *anima* when quoting the Psalms (where *anima* generally stands for the Hebrew concept of ‘nepesh’, to be discussed in the next section), from his own use of this word (to the extent to which the two can be distinguished). Intertextuality is a key feature of the *Confessions*, which were written in constant dialogue with the Psalms and the New Testament, while being anchored at the same time in St Augustine’s “pagan” Latin of the fourth century Africa and Europe, and this presents special challenges for the analysis.

As usual, the two universal semantic primes – I and BODY – give us a good entry point to St Augustine’s self-understanding: *ego* and *corpus*, and there are many references to these two throughout the work. In addition, however, there are four more protagonists: *anima*, *animus*, *mens*, and *cor*. Of these four, *cor* is the easiest one to understand through ordinary English. Perhaps the most famous line in the *Confessions* renders *cor* as *heart*, as it seems, quite successfully:

... fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te. (Book I, 1.1)

‘... you made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.’ (Pine-Coffin’s translation, Penguin Classics, 1975)

The same cannot be said, however, about the other three Latin constructs on which the *Confessions* rely: *anima*, *animus*, and *mens*. The Latin distinction between *ani-*

ma and *animus* is particularly difficult to render in ordinary English. Lewis & Short's (1962) *A Latin Dictionary* defines these words as follows: "*animus*: In a general sense, *the rational soul* in men (in opp. to the body, *corpus*); *anima*: the vital principle, the breath of life." The latter definition is followed with Lewis and Short's comment: "hence, *anima* denotes the animal principle of life, in distinction from *animus*, the spiritual, reasoning, willing principle".

A good example of the problems which arise when the translator needs to render St Augustine's meanings in English is presented by the dramatic story of Augustine's conversion, which St Augustine himself describes (in Henry Chadwick's accurate rendering) as "that grand struggle in my inner house". Some other translators introduce the modern English word *self* here – presumably, in an effort to connect with modern English readers. Thus, R. S. Pine-Coffin (1975: 170), in the Penguin Classics edition, writes:

My inner self was a house divided against itself. In the heat of the fierce conflict which I had stirred up against my soul [*anima*] in our common abode, my heart [*cor*], I turned upon Alypius. My looks betrayed the commotion in my mind [*mens*] as I exclaimed, 'What is the matter with us? What is the meaning of this story? These men have not had our schooling, yet they stand up and storm the gates of heaven while we, for all our learning, lie here grovelling in this world of flesh and blood! Is it because they have led the way that we are ashamed to follow? Is it not worse to hold back?

I cannot remember the words I used. I said something to this effect and then my feelings proved too strong for me. I broke off and turned away, leaving him to gaze at me speechless and astonished. For my voice sounded strange and the expression of my face and eyes, my flushed cheeks and the pitch of my voice told him more of the state of my mind [*animus*] than the actual words that I spoke. (Book VIII, 8.20, Pine-Coffin's translation, p. 170)

It is not possible to try to discuss here the meanings of all four *anima*, *animus*, *mens* and *cor*. The leading role belongs undoubtedly to *anima*. Crucially, it is only *anima* that St Augustine speaks of as the invisible ("interior") counterpart of the visible ("exterior") body, for example, when he describes himself as a "homo" ('human being'):

... et direxi me ad me et dixi mihi, 'tu quis es?', et respondi, 'homo.' et ecce **corpus** et **anima** in me mihi praesto sunt, unum exterius et alterum interius (...) sed melius quod interius. (Book X, 6.9)

'Then I turned toward myself and said to myself: 'Who are you?' I replied 'A man'. I see in myself a **body** and a **soul**, one external, the other internal. (...) What is inward is superior.' (Chadwick's translation, p. 184)

Similarly, God is addressed as "conditor universitatis, conditor **animarum** et **corporum**", that is, 'creator of the universe, creator of souls and bodies (Book XI, 31.41, p. 245). And one more example:

Deum nostrum, deum verum, qui fecisti non solum **animas** nostras sed etiam **corpora**, nec tantum nostras **animas** et **corpora**, sed omnes et omnia. (Book VII, 3.4)

'... our God, the true God, who made not only our souls [animas], but also our bodies, not only our souls [animas] and bodies, but all rational things and everything.' (Chadwick's translation, p. 113)

There are many sentences in the *Confessions* which suggest that St Augustine sometimes thought of his *anima* as a place. To mention just two, he says to God:

Angusta est domus animae meae quo venias ad eam (Book 1, 5.6)

'My soul is like a house, small for you to enter.' (Pine-Coffin's translation, p. 5)

... invoco te in animam meam ... (Book XIII, 1, 1)

'I call you to come into my soul ...' (Pine-Coffin's translation, p. 311)

Most of the time, however, St Augustine speaks of his *anima* as if it was *someone* rather than a place. He attributes to this someone a wide range of feelings, wants, and thoughts, and he can admonish this someone as one could admonish another person. For example:

Noli esse vana, anima mea, et obsurdescere in aure cordis tumultu vanitatis tuae. (Book IV, 11,16)

'My soul, (...) do not be foolish; do not let the din of your folly deafen the ears of your heart.' (Pine-Coffin's translation, p. 81)

Occasionally, St Augustine can also identify with his *animus*, and he says at one point "ego animus" ('I [the] *animus*'), translated in the Penguin Classics as "I, the soul". Yet he doesn't talk to his 'animus', as he talks to his 'anima'. It is the 'anima', the deepest, life-giving part of him, that he addresses: "tibi dico, anima" ("I say to you, *anima*"), a phrase omitted in the Penguin Classics translation, where the translator prefers to speak of the *anima* in the third person. And it is this life-giving *anima* that he likens with the source of all life, God:

... iam tu melior es, tibi dico, anima, quoniam tu vegetas molem corporis tui praebeas ei vitam, quod nullum corpus praestat corpori. Deus autem tuus etiam tibi vitae vita est. (Book X, 6, 10)

'And I know that my soul [anima] is the better part of me, because it animates the whole of my body. It gives it life, and this is something that no body can give to another body. But God is even more. He is the Life of the life of my soul.' (Pine-Coffin's translation, p. 213)

While I cannot undertake a thorough investigation of St Augustine's use of *anima* here, I will nonetheless venture to draft an explication of this key concept, using a template developed for ethno-psychological concepts elsewhere (Wierzbicka 2014b).

someone's anima (Latin, as in St Augustine's "Confessions")

[A] [WHAT IT IS]

something inside this someone
 this something is part of this someone
 people can't see this something
 people can't touch this something
 this something is not part of this someone's body
 because this someone has this part, this someone can live

[B] [WHAT CAN HAPPEN INSIDE THIS SOMETHING]

many things happen inside this something
 these things can be very good, these things can be very bad

[C] [HOW THIS SOMEONE CAN THINK ABOUT IT]

this someone can think about this something like this:
 "this something is like someone
 it can feel something, want something, say something,
 think something about something
 I can say something to it"
 at the same time this someone can think about this something like this:
 "this something is me"
 sometimes, this someone can think about it like this:
 "this something is like a place inside me"

[D] [WHAT PEOPLE CAN KNOW ABOUT THIS PART OF SOMEONE]

people can know that this part of someone is something very good
 at the same time, people can know that it is like this:
 "something very bad can happen to this part of someone
 if it happens, it is very bad for this someone"

When one looks at St Augustine's 'anima' from a cross-linguistic perspective, two aspects of it seem particularly noteworthy: first, frequent references to inner 'happenings', and second, the very broad scope of those inner happenings. Three examples, referring to emotions, thoughts and speech:

Et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae. (Book XI, 29.39)

'The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul [anima].' (Chadwick's translation, p. 244)

Ecce est coram te, deus meus, viva recordatio animae meae (Book II, 9.17)

‘See before you, my God, the living memory of my soul [anima].’ (Chadwick’s translation, p. 33)

Nonne tibi confitetur anima mea confessione veridica metiri me tempora? (Book XI, 26.33)

‘My anima’s confession to you is surely truthful when my soul declares that times are measured by me.’ (Chadwick’s translation, p. 239) (Lit. “my anima confesses”).

At the same time, very simple volitions, such as “ordering” parts of one’s body to move, are also attributed to one’s ‘anima’:

Faciliusque obtemperabat corpus tenuissimae voluntati animae, ut ad nutum membra moverentur quam iupsa sibi anima ad voluntatem suam magnam in sola voluntate perficiendam. (Book VIII, 8.20)

‘The body obeyed even the slightest inclination of the soul [anima] to move the limbs at its pleasure more easily than the soul [anima] obeyed itself.’ (Chadwick’s translation, p. 147)

Another noteworthy aspect of St Augustine’s concept of ‘anima’ is its ‘moral’ dimension (for want of a better term), that is, its sensitivity to good and bad – not only good and bad feelings but also good and bad wants and thoughts. Thus, Augustine can talk, ruefully, about his *anima’s superbia* (‘arrogance/pride’), and also, hopefully, about his *anima’s* power to reach for God:

... mortalitatis meae, poena superbiae animae meae. (Book II, 2.2)

‘... my mortality, the penalty of the pride of my anima.’ (‘... my mortal condition, the penalty of my pride.’ Chadwick’s translation, p. 24)

Per ipsam animam meam ascendam ad illum [deum meum] (Book 10 7.11)

‘Through my soul [anima] I will ascend to him [my God].’ (Chadwick’s translation, p. 185)

The idea that the invisible part of a person is itself like a person who feels and wants and that one can speak to it as one could to another person, links the concept of ‘anima’ as we find it in the *Confessions* with the way the human person was viewed in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the Psalms. Since St Augustine was an avid reader of the Psalms and often wove quotations from the Psalms into his own sentences, it seems likely that the Hebrew concept of ‘nepesh’ (roughly, ‘soul’), rendered in Latin as ‘anima’, influenced his own self-understanding and his use of the word *anima*. At the same time, there are some remarkable differences between the Latin *anima* and the Hebrew *nepesh*. I will look at the Hebrew concept in the next section.

5 The Hebrew ‘nepesh’ and the New Testament ‘psykhe’

The ancient Hebrew ways of thinking about a person are clearly reflected in the Psalms (though not necessarily in translations of the Psalms into modern European

languages). To take just one example, in Psalm 26, the speaker, confident of his innocence and rectitude, invites God to test him: “Search my heart and mind”. Or at least this is what the New American Bible offers, implying that King David and his contemporaries saw the human person as possessing, in addition to the body, a heart and a mind, and that the mind, along with the heart, was the seat of a person’s good and bad thoughts.

In the Hebrew original of the Psalm, however, there is no mention of anything like “mind”. Instead, we get the words *lib-i* and *khilyot-ay*, whose literal meanings are ‘heart’ and ‘kidneys’. This is, in fact, how the King James’ Version, which stayed much closer to the original, rendered the verses in question:

Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity. (...)
Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; Try my reins [kidneys] and my heart. (Ps. 26, KJV)

References to the “heart” alone can be found, for example, in Psalms 4, 14, and 108:

You have put gladness in my heart,
More than in the season that their grain and wine increased. (Ps. 4, NKJV)

The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ (Ps. 14, NKJV)

O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise (Ps. 108, NKJV)

Above all, the Psalms are full of references and invocations to the speaker’s *nepesh* (roughly, soul), as in the following examples:

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God (...)
Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance. (Ps. 42, NKJV)

Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. (Ps. 22, KJV)

How exactly were a person’s wants, feelings, and good and bad thoughts partitioned between the “kidneys”, the “heart” and the *nepesh* in the Hebrew Bible and Hebrew thinking in different periods is a large and complex topic which cannot be discussed here in any detail. The huge literature on the Hebrew Bible bears of course on this topic, but it doesn’t fully clarify it, partly because it often does not seek to discuss it in terms of simple and self-explanatory concepts such as ‘think’, ‘want’, ‘feel’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Two things, however, seem crystal-clear: first, there was no “mind” in the Hebrew ethnopsychology, that is, no invisible part of a person dedicated to thinking and knowing, and second, no special attention was given to “thinking” as such. Rather, the invisible and intangible parts of a person were construed in terms of a person’s propensity for good and bad thoughts, good and bad wants, and good and bad feelings.

As a first attempt to articulate the ethnopsychology reflected in the Psalms in NSM, I would venture the following explications:

my kidneys (khilyot-ay)

something inside me
 this something is a part of me
 sometimes this something says to me about something:
 “it will be bad if you do this, it will be good if you don’t do it”
 I can think about it like this: “this something is my kidneys”

my heart (lib-i)

something inside me
 this something is a part of me
 sometimes this something feels something, it can be something good, it can be something bad
 sometimes this something wants me to do something, it can be something good, it can be something bad
 sometimes this something says something, it can be something good, it can be something bad
 sometimes this something thinks something about some things,
 it can be something good, it can be something bad
 I can think about it like this: “this something is my heart”

Turning now to the Hebrew “soul” (*nepesh*), I will note that, as the frequent invocation to “my soul” in the Psalms show, that “soul” is seen not only as “a part of me” (as in the case of ‘my heart’ and ‘my kidneys’) but also as an imaginary inner “someone” who can be addressed and with whom the speaker can be in a dialogical relationship. The speaker attributed his deepest feelings and aspirations to that someone to whom he could innerly speak and with whom he can identify. Accordingly, if I can think of my ‘heart’ as a ‘part of me’, I can think of my ‘nepesh’ as simply ‘me’.

For comparability with the other concepts discussed in this chapter, I will not try to explicate here the concept of ‘*napshi*’ (roughly, ‘my soul’), central as it is to the Psalms, but rather, present a full explication of ‘nepesh’ (roughly, ‘soul’). It is worth noting in this context that when the King James Version urges the readers to love God with all their soul (“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”, Deut 6.5, KJV), the Hebrew Bible urges its reader to love God with all their *nepesh* (*The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 1999).

someone's *nepesh* (Biblical Hebrew)

[A] [WHAT IT IS]

something inside this someone
 this something is part of this someone
 people can't see this something
 people can't touch this something
 this something is not part of this someone's body
 this something is something very good
 because this someone has this part, this someone can live

[B] [HOW THIS SOMEONE CAN THINK ABOUT THIS SOMETHING]

this someone can think about this something like this:
 "this something is like someone
 this something can want something very much
 this something can feel something very bad,
 sometimes this something can feel something good
 I can say something to this something"
 at the same time this someone can think about this something like this:
 "this something is me"

[C] [WHAT THIS PART OF SOMEONE IS LIKE]

[needs further investigation]

[D] [WHAT PEOPLE CAN KNOW ABOUT THIS PART OF SOMEONE]

people can know that it is like this:
 something very bad can happen to this part of someone,
 other people can do something very bad to it
 if this happens, it is very bad for this someone

Some of the most important features of a person's 'nepesh' (in the relevant sense) are linked with the other senses of the word *nepesh*, as discussed, for example, in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Botterweck et al. 1999). Those other senses are glossed in the Dictionary as 'throat', 'desire', and 'life'. The sense of *nepesh* rendered in the King James Version of the Bible as 'soul' is variously glossed by the Dictionary as "vital self", "vital force", "psychic power" and "abundant personality". At the same time, the Dictionary comments: "Since *nepesh* means "vital force", it is reasonable to ask what happens to it after death ...*nepesh* is never given the meaning of an indestructible core of being, in contradistinction to the physical life, and even capable of living when cut off from that life" (vol. IX, p. 515).

If we compare the Hebrew *nepesh* with St Augustine's *anima*, one aspect which stands out most is the view of one's 'nepesh' as constantly threatened by other people, often expressed in dramatic images such as "my soul is among lions" (Psalm 54, KJV). As the *Theological Dictionary's* entry on *nepesh* notes, "Many texts have to do with saving life ... a large number speak of threats to life" (pp. 510–513). Relatedly, one's 'nepesh' often experiences very strong 'bad' feelings, such as fear, desperation and bitterness. Discussing this aspect of *nepesh*, Westermann (1997: 748–750) draws attention to the fixed expression *mar nepesh*, "embittered nepesh", which in his view is typical of the Old Testament understanding of *nepesh*. At the same time, one's *nepesh* is dominated by very strong wants, often described by the metaphors of thirst and hunger.

Nepesh is life-giving, very precious, and given to strong negative emotions and to intense wants but not so much to positive emotions (such as rejoicing and gladness), which belong, rather, to the domain of the Hebrew 'heart'. Good feelings attributed to the *nepesh* are usually related to escapes from dangers and terror, when one's *nepesh* gets 'restored'. The *nepesh* can be urged to rejoice (rather than to be cast down), but only the 'heart' seems to be described as actually rejoicing. The speaker beseeches God to 'deliver' or 'rescue' his *nepesh* from external attackers. This is different from St Augustine's appeals to God to 'heal' his *anima* from its own bad thoughts and wants.

Another difference between *nepesh* and *anima* is that while given to strong wants and feelings, *nepesh* does not engage a person's thoughts, as Augustine's *anima* does. Thoughts are associated with the Hebrew 'heart' (which is only 'a part of me') rather than with that life-giving, precious inner core which is really 'me'.

Arguably, the deepest link between, on the one hand, the *nepesh* of the Hebrew Bible, and especially of the Psalms, and on the other hand, the *anima* of St Augustine's *Confessions* lies in the dialogical character of both: both *nepesh* and *anima* are a person's partner in their internal dialogue, a dialogue in which a part of a person which this person can see as 'me' can also become a 'thou' and be intimately addressed.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that while modern European languages carry a legacy of the Hebrew *nepesh* in their ethnopsychologies, they also carry the legacy of the New Testament *psykhe* – a word which presumably is the New Testament Greek rendering of the Hebrew (and Aramaic) word *nepesh* as used by Jesus.⁴ Thus, in St. Mathew's Gospel Jesus says: "And do not fear those who kill the body but

⁴ The semantic history of the Greek word *psykhe* awaits a thorough investigation, based on a rigorous semantic methodology. Bruno Snell's pioneering study *The Entdeckung des Geistes* (1946), translated into English as *The Discovery of the Mind* (1953), is rich and fascinating, but hardly precise or rigorous. Snell's claims that before the 5th century BC, Greek had no word for *body* are not supported by methodical semantic analysis, and the same applies to his overall interpretation of the early Greek ethnopsychology.

cannot kill the soul [*psykhe*]. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Mt. 10:28, NKJV) It seems clear that this use of *nepesh* (underlying the Greek word *psykhe* of the New Testament Greek) is in dialogue with the older *nepesh*. As we have seen, in that older use, a person ‘*nepesh*’ could be attacked and destroyed by one’s enemies (as, for example, in Psalms 22 and 35). By contrast, in the New Testament vision, one’s *psykhe* (= *nepesh*) cannot be killed by any attackers. Other people can’t even damage a person’s *psykhe* (= *nepesh*), only the ‘owner’ can damage it (by doing something bad). Since one’s *nepesh* (*psykhe*) cannot be killed, even after one dies, one can live (presumably, in another way). Thus, the link between *nepesh* and life, prominent in the *nepesh* of the Psalms, is maintained, but is also reinterpreted: it is not a person’s physical life (ended by death) which depends on this person’s *nepesh*, but the life which can be continued (forever) after the person dies.

These new ideas had profound impact on the semantic developments in European languages after the Christianisation of Europe and have left their imprint in the meanings of words such as French *âme*, Italian *anima*, English *soul*, German *Seele* and the Russian *duša* – different as these words are, semantically, from one another. (Cf. Wierzbicka 1992, Chapter 1). These developments cannot be discussed in the scope of this chapter, but at least a partial explication of the New Testament *psykhe* is in order.

someone’s ‘*psykhe*’ (New Testament Greek)

[A] [WHAT IT IS]

something inside this someone
 this something is part of this someone
 people can’t see this something
 people can’t touch this something
 this something is not part of this someone’s body

 this something is something very good

[B] [HOW THIS SOMEONE CAN THINK ABOUT THIS SOMETHING]

this someone can think about this something like this:
 “this something is like someone
 this something can want something very much
 this something can feel something very bad,
 sometimes this something can feel something very good
 I can say something to this something”
 at the same time this someone can think about this something like this:
 “this something is me”

[C] [WHAT THIS PART OF SOMEONE IS LIKE]

this part of someone is not like anything else
 people have this part, (other) living things don't have a part like this
 because of this, people are not like (other) living things

[D] [WHAT PEOPLE CAN KNOW ABOUT THIS PART OF SOMEONE]

people can know that it is like this:
 after someone dies, this part of this someone doesn't die
 because of this, after this someone does, this someone can live in another
 way
 when this someone lives in this other way, this someone can live forever
 at the same time, people can know that it is like this:
 something very bad can happen to this part of someone,
 if this happens, it is very bad for this someone
 it can happen if this someone does something bad
 other people can't do anything bad to this part of someone

6 The 'theory of person' in Australian languages Yolngu and Warlpiri

Turning now to the Yolngu "theory of person", in their 2013 seminar on Yolngu which was mentioned earlier, Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy (who are very prominent experts on Yolngu language and culture) discussed a number of Yolngu words and phrases associated, in different ways, with 'thinking', linking them with the "Yolngu theory of mind".

But since Yolngu has no word for 'mind', the phrase "theory of mind" does not reflect an authentic Yolngu perspective on the make-up of the human being. "Theory of mind" is a powerful phrase, which, as noted earlier, has made a huge career in Anglophone psychology, philosophy and anthropology. It is not a phrase, however, that would allow us to look at human groups from a neutral, culture-independent perspective. On the contrary, it is a phrase which carries with it an orientation shaped by modern Anglo culture.

Yet an alternative banner is readily available, and also has an established tradition behind it: it is the banner of French anthropologist Marcel Mauss's (1938) classic paper "La Notion de Personne, Celle de Moi" ('The Notion of Person, that is, of I'). Anthropologists Geoffrey White and John Kirkpatrick took up the banner of "person" as a tool for cross-cultural research in their classic 1985 book *Person, Self and Experience: Exploring Pacific ethnopsychologies*, and so did some other anthropologists. But to many Anglophone social scientists, the evocative force of

the English word *mind* seems irresistible – perhaps illustrating that power that a language’s cultural keywords⁵ may exercise over the minds (!) of the speakers, including academics across a wide range of disciplines.⁶

In English, and in many other languages, thinking is associated with a visible part of the body, the head, and also – more idiosyncratically – with an invisible part of the person, ‘mind’. In Yolngu, thinking is associated with different parts of the head, but it is not linked with an invisible part of the person. So the two “theories of person” are different. In the Anglo/English model, the two main parts of the person are the visible body and an invisible part construed in terms of thinking and knowing. In the Yolngu model, there are also two main parts: the visible body and another, invisible part; but in Yolngu, this invisible part is not construed in terms of thinking and knowing. Instead, it is focussed on what one might call a ‘life-giving’ part of the person (echoing the St Augustine’s *anima*, which he saw as giving life to the body, and especially the Hebrew *nepesh*, in whose meaning the life-giving aspect is particularly salient). The key word in question is *birrimbirr*, defined by Frances and Howard Morphy (2013) as follows:

birrimbirr: soul; the animating force from the *wanjarr* [Dreaming, sacred realm] that enters the foetus at conception and returns to the *wanjarr* realm at death.

In a personal email, Frances Morphy has offered the following additional explanations:

Birrimbirr is the aspect of the person that returns to the ancestral well to join the ancestral spirit stuff that their conception spirit came from (so that the Yolngu almost but not quite have a belief in reincarnation – the emphasis is more on the ancestral spirit stuff constantly manifesting itself through conception rather than an individual spirit being reincarnated more than once). (7/6/2013)

As these explanations make clear, *birrimbirr* belongs to a “theory of a person” which is deeply embedded in the overall system of Yolngu cultural beliefs and ideas. Trying to get some understanding of this theory, we could posit the following components couched in simple words cross-translatable into Yolngu itself:

⁵ For the notion of ‘cultural keywords’ see Wierzbicka (1997).

⁶ While the French word *personne* and the English word *person* carry with them meanings that are not fully cross-translatable either (cf. Wierzbicka 2002: 68–74), they are very close to the universal concept ‘someone’, which is cross-translatable. So if we sometimes use words like *personne* and *person* as convenient reference points in cross-cultural research (bearing in mind that what we really mean is ‘someone’), not much harm is done. This is not the case, however, with the English word *mind*, which is profoundly culturally shaped and has no equivalents in other languages, not even European ones.

someone's *birrimbirr*

[A] [WHAT IT IS]

something inside this someone
 this something is part of this someone
 people can't see this something
 people can't touch this something
 this something is not part of this someone's body

this something is something very good
 because there is this something inside this someone, this someone can live

[B] [HOW THIS SOMEONE CAN THINK ABOUT THIS SOMETHING]

[needs further investigation]

[C] [WHAT THIS PART OF SOMEONE IS LIKE]

this part of someone is not like anything else
 (other) living things don't have a part like this
 because people have this part, people are not like (other) living things

[D] [WHAT PEOPLE CAN KNOW ABOUT THIS PART OF SOMEONE]

people can know that it is like this:

some time before this someone was born/this part of this someone was
 part of a place where some people lived before
 after this someone dies, this part of this someone can be part of the same
 place

There are no references to 'thinking' in this formula, so the similarity with the English *mind* is really quite limited. Yes, there is a reference here – as in the explanation of *mind* – to an invisible part of a person, but this part is not construed in terms of 'thinking' or 'knowing'. Rather, it is construed in terms of a special place (territory, part of the land), to which the person is seen as intimately linked and as it were receiving life from.

This link of the invisible part of the person with the place, extending beyond the person's bodily life in both directions (past and future), is the most distinctive aspect of the Yolngu theory of person (and the ethnotheories embedded in other Australian languages). While there are clearly more links between *birrimbirr* and the Latin *anima* than between *birrimbirr* and the English *mind*, there are no links between *anima* and a particular territory: the only 'place' to which *anima* refers is a place inside the person, not any external place (a piece of land). From a cross-linguistic perspective this is the most unusual aspect of the Australian Aboriginal

“theory of person”, very salient, for example, in Margaret Kemarre Turner’s auto-ethnographical account *What it means to be an Aboriginal person* (2010).

I have only included in the explication a very brief reference to the “Dreaming” [*Waṇarr*], the “sacred realm” or the “ancestral spirit stuff”, because while some such notions are undoubtedly in the background, there doesn’t seem to be any evidence that they are fully embedded in the meaning of the word *birrimbirr* as such. In order to fully understand the concept of ‘birrimbirr’, in its cultural context, the reader of the explication would need to read also the explication of the word *waṇarr*. Whether or not a component referring to a special ‘sacred’ time is to be added to the definition of *birrimbirr*, there will be many references to both people and places in the explication of words like *waṇarr* (‘Dreaming’) in Australian languages, so the links between the “theory of person” and the “theory of the sacred realm” will not be lost sight of in the over-all picture (See Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2015).

To undertake any comparison, one needs a stable common measure, a *tertium comparationis*. Such a common measure can be found in universal ethno-psychological concepts such as ‘think’, ‘know’, ‘want’, ‘feel’ and ‘die’. It cannot be found in language- and culture-specific ethno-psychological constructs such as ‘sind’, ‘mine’, ‘duša’, ‘anima’, ‘nepesh’, ‘birrimbirr’, or ‘mind’. Furthermore, it is only those shared and elementary concepts which allow us to pinpoint the differences within related words *within* one language, such as, for example, *soul* and *spirit* in English, *âme* and *esprit* in French, *Seele* and *Geist* in German, or *pirilirpa* and *man-garrpa* in another Australian language, Warlpiri, to which I will now briefly turn (without proceeding to explications).

Thanks to the existence of the monumental online dictionary of Warlpiri (Laughren et al. 2006) we have more material pertinent to the make-up of the human person in Warlpiri than in any of another Australian language. The most distinctive feature of this dictionary is its inclusion of a large number of “folk definitions” and illustrations formulated in Warlpiri by Warlpiri consultants. While in many instances these definitions and explanations are presented to the reader in translations contaminated by academic English, which distorts the indigenous meanings and understandings, a great many observations of the Warlpiri consultants are also rendered in fairly minimal English which can offer good insight into the meaning of what the Warlpiri consultant actually said.

The English “word-finder” leads the dictionary user from the English word *soul* to the Warlpiri word *pirilirpa*, and it is clear from the material included in the dictionary that *pirilirpa* is indeed the main counterpart of the body in the Warlpiri model of the human person. Thus, the main folk definition of *pirilirpa* states: “*Pirilirpa* is what we have that is alive inside us – Aboriginals, Whites – here on this earth.” The invisible inner part that all people (and apparently only people) have inside them is clearly linked, in the Warlpiri speaker’s mind, with being alive – a link underscored by the gloss “life-force” frequently used by the English transla-

tions of the Warlpiri comments. Thus, in a long story of various bad things that can happen to a person's *pirlirpa*, in which the word *pirlirpa* occurs ten times, the English translation renders it six times as 'soul', and three times as 'life-force'. The following extract can give the reader the flavour of the consultant's comments:

Pirlirpa is what is in the belly. If you are sleeping, someone might come up to you, or might shout at you, yell out, and you might wake up all of a sudden. You might say to someone, if another person comes up to you, about how you feel, "I seem to be in a bad way. I have become weak. I am feeling poorly. (...) Another person can ask you, "Did people shout at you?" "Yes, I think they spoke to me. It woke me up very rudely." "Well, Maybe your soul [*pirlirpa*] has gone up into the sky. And that is why you have become unwell, why you are feeling tired, because you have no life-force [*pirlirpa*].

The link between a person's *pirlirpa* and their staying alive is also underscored by the fact that after a person dies, their invisible inner part is no longer called *pirlirpa* but something else: *manparrpa* (glossed in English as "ghost, soul, spirit, shade"). For example, the Warlpiri consultant comments: "The ghost [*manparrpa*], that is the soul [*pirlirpa*] of a dead person, can go into a lizard or a gecko." More typically, however, a person's *pirlirpa* (also referred to as *kuntu*) goes back into the land:

From a dead body, that soul, spirit [*pirlirpa*, *kuntu*], where does it go then? It goes up into the sky, or perhaps the soul [*kuntu*] goes back into its own country. His own land and Dreaming that belongs to him. Like he goes back to the big water-source of his own country.

The material concerning *pirlirpa* included in the Warlpiri dictionary suggests a meaning either identical or very close to that of the Yolngu *birrimbirr*. It is true that the Warlpiri consultant's comments describe in detail various bad things that can happen to a (living) person's *pirlirpa* when it leaves this person's body (while the person is asleep) whereas no such information is provided by the Yolngu dictionary. This is likely, however, to be due to the incompleteness of the relevant entry in the Yolngu dictionary, since similar comments are included in lexicographic or ethnographic descriptions of many other Australian languages. If further investigation of Yolngu establishes such components are present in the meaning of *birrimbirr*, too, then of course they would need to be accommodated in some form in a lexicographic portrayal of this word, too.

7 Cultural key words and dictionaries of endangered languages

Most of the world's languages are dying out. Twenty years ago, Michael Krauss (1992) estimated that as things are going, within a hundred years more than a half of the world's 6,000 languages could be extinct; by the end of the 21st century,

most of the remaining languages will be endangered, and likely to be lost in the following century. Globalisation, displacement, and the needs of communication between native speakers of different languages are resulting, all over the world, in languages falling silent. In the era of massive language loss and endangerment, it is surely a matter of great urgency to undertake similar soul-searching in the area of bilingual lexicography of indigenous and endangered languages.

In his dictionary of Yolngu, David Zorc (1986: 29) glosses *birrimbirr* as follows: “soul, human spirit (goes to the Land of departed spirits to be reincarnated).” It seems clear, however, that the word *reincarnated*, which is part of the established European conceptual vocabulary, sends wrong signals here. Furthermore, such references to concepts alien to indigenous speakers close off the dictionary from its potential indigenous users (e.g., Yolngu teachers). Such wrong signals and unnecessary barriers can be avoided if instead of complex and culturally alien concepts like ‘reincarnation’ the dictionary were to rely on simple and universal concepts such as ‘die’, ‘live’ and ‘be born’.

It goes without saying that in a bilingual dictionary produced in English, the glosses have to be written in English words. They do not have to be written, however, in words shaped by the Anglo/English universe of meaning and by the European repertoire of cultural references (such as, for example, *reincarnated*).

This example illustrates a more general problem of how cultural keywords should be treated in the dictionaries of indigenous and endangered languages. The prevailing tradition expects such words to be glossed in the conceptual language of the English-speaking (and English-thinking) lexicographers. This means that the lexicographers are communicating with their readers on the culturally-shaped level of communication (Anglo), which is out of touch with indigenous thinking and which may exclude indigenous people as potential users of the dictionary. Of course the lexicographer **needs** to communicate with the Anglo/English reader, but this can be achieved through cross-translatable words, keeping the glosses accessible, in principle, to indigenous readers, too.

For example, in a language revitalisation workshop, when the meaning of a cultural keyword such as *birrimbirr* needs to be explained to young people for whom Aboriginal English or Kriol is the main language, a definition phrased in terms of ‘die’, ‘live’ and ‘be born’ is likely to be more helpful than one framed in terms of words and phrases like “reincarnated”, “foetus”, “conception”, “animating force” or “departed spirits”.

Similarly, in a language documentation project, when academic researchers and indigenous consultants are trying to put on record endangered cultural key concepts, a discussion framed in cross-translatable words such as *die*, *live* and *be born* allows both greater accuracy of the resulting definition and a better chance of mutual understanding between the researcher and the consultant. (See Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014b; Wierzbicka 2014a, Chapter 11.)

It should also be noted that in order to define cultural keywords like *birrimbirr* outside European thinking, the lexicographer would sometimes need to depart

from the traditions of European bilingual lexicography not only in the metalanguage but also in the expected structure of the dictionary entry. For example, could some version of the explication of *birrimbirr* presented here (phrased in simple English and cross-translatable into Yolngu) be included in a future dictionary of Yolngu? And if not, what is the best way of salvaging endangered cultural meanings such as that of *birrimbirr* in the dictionaries of endangered languages? To my mind, this is one of the urgent questions that linguists dedicated to the cause of recording endangered languages need to address. (Cf. Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014b. For an earlier attempt to raise such questions in relation to Australian lexicography, see Wierzbicka 1983).

More than fifteen years ago the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (1991) under the editorship of John Sinclair and Patrick Hanks was bold enough and imaginative enough to

... break with a long established tradition in the style in which the entries are written. Over the years, originally for reasons of space, dictionaries have established dozens of stylistic conventions. (...) The compilers of this dictionary have considered each convention carefully, and rejected all but a few of them because of the trouble they cause. (Sinclair 1991: xvi)

Arguably, in the era when most languages of the world are either critically endangered or dying out similar boldness is called for in the area of bilingual lexicography. The matter is outside the scope of this chapter, but just to give one brief example of how the problem could be approached with the help of NSM techniques, I would suggest two possible solutions to the question of how to deal with a word like *birrimbirr* in a multi-purpose bilingual dictionary. The first is a compromise solution, half-way between the indigenous meaning and an “anglicised” interpretation of that meaning. The second includes a full NSM explication, with a reference to the “sacred realm” (*Waṇarr*) and a cross-reference to the entry on *Waṇarr*.

1. *birrimbirr*: a person’s spirit; it comes from the spirit of the place and after the person dies, returns to the same place. (See *Waṇarr* ‘Dreaming’.)
2. *birrimbirr*: something inside a person, it is part of the person; because a person has this part, this person can live; people can’t see this part; people can’t touch this part; before the person was born, this part was part of a place where some people lived before, after this person dies, this part will be part of the same place. (See *Waṇarr*.)

8 Conclusions

There are two level of verbal communication because there are two levels at which people “articulate” the world (to pour a new meaning into the old phrase “double

articulation”). When the world is being articulated into ‘things’, ‘living creatures’, ‘places’, and ‘people’, this is the universal level of construal, which enables a universal level of communication. Similarly, when ‘things’ are described as ‘big’ or ‘small’ or when ‘someone doing something bad’ is being distinguished from ‘something bad happening to someone’, we are at the level of construal compatible with universal human communication. When, on the other hand, there is a talk of ‘reincarnation’, ‘life forces’, ‘animating forces’, ‘self’ or ‘mind’, communication happens on a different level – the level of a particular community of discourse. If we distinguish between these two levels we can recognize both the cultural shaping of all languages (leading to their conceptual diversity) and the existence of conceptual universals, embodied lexically (and therefore tangibly, verifiably) in all, or nearly all, languages of the world.

Despite the caricatural portrayals of Humboldt’s, Boas’, Sapir’s and Whorf’s thinking which have dominated linguistics for decades (cf. Pavlenko 2014; Wierzbicka 1992), such ‘double articulation’ is consistent with the deepest ideas that these great scholars expressed (at least at times) in their own work. Their main interests were different from those of Leibniz, who initiated a search for what he called “the alphabet of human thought” (*alphabetum cogitationum humanarum*), but the two lines of thoughts are not incompatible. In fact, despite their great emphasis on the diversity of languages and thought-worlds embedded in them, Humboldt, Boas, Sapir and Whorf all recognized, in different ways, the existence of a conceptual core shared by all of them. Thus, Humboldt, whose inspiration came from in-depth study of the sacred Javanese language Kawi and who was deeply impressed by the enormous diversity of languages, nonetheless wrote:

To be sure, a midpoint, around which all languages revolve, can be sought and really found, and this midpoint should always be kept in mind in the comparative study of languages, both the grammar and lexicon. For in both there is a number of things which can be determined completely *a priori*, and which can be separated from the conditions of a particular language. On the other hand, there is *a far greater* number of concepts, and also grammatical peculiarities, which are so inextricably woven into the individuality of the language that they can neither be kept suspended between all languages on the mere thread of inner perception nor can they be carried over into another language without alteration. (Humboldt 1903–36 [1836], v. 4, pp. 21–23; emphasis added).

There is no conflict between acknowledging the enormous conceptual diversity of languages and recognizing the existence of a small shared core. If there can be two levels of verbal communication among people, it is because a culturally-shaped level can be erected, in every human community, on the foundations provided by the ‘hard-wired’ ‘alphabet of human thoughts’ and by the combinatorial properties of the individual ‘letters’. Or so the NSM theory argues and the present chapter seeks to illustrate.

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VI. Verbal communication quality

Nicholas Allott

24 Misunderstandings in verbal communication¹

Abstract: There is no dominant theory of misunderstanding, perhaps because causes of breakdown in communication are too disparate. Moreover, there are sharp theoretical and methodological differences between research traditions. Work in cognitive pragmatics, drawing on philosophy of language, has shown that a) the linguistic material uttered serves as a clue to what is communicated, and does not determine it; b) what is communicated can be broken down into several components, including the proposition expressed, implicatures and illocutionary force. It follows that communication is inherently risky, and that there are many ways to misunderstand. Work with a more sociological orientation has focussed on misunderstandings that are due to cultural differences, and on strategies for repair. There is consensus that a) speakers maximise their chance of being understood by tailoring utterances to the hearer, anticipating and trying to head off problems; b) participants in a conversation demonstrate that, and how, they have understood, and monitor each other's comprehension.

Keywords: communication, pragmatics, relevance theory, inference, Conversation Analysis, misunderstanding, repair, 'uh' and 'um', linguistic underdeterminacy, Grice

1 Introduction

1.1 Theoretical perspectives on misunderstanding

Research in several areas is relevant to the study of misunderstanding. This paper draws on three, each of which is broad and internally varied:

- (i) work on the nature of speaker meaning and communication in linguistic pragmatics and philosophy of language (e.g., Grice 1957; Grice 1975; Sperber & Wilson 1986);

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- (ii) work on miscommunication and repair strategies in the ‘talk-in-interaction’ and Conversation Analysis (CA) framework (e.g., Gumperz 1982a; Schegloff 1987; Dascal 1999; House, Kasper & Ross 2003) plus related work on miscommunication and culture (e.g., Gumperz 1982b; Pride 1985; Di Luzio, Günthner & Orletti 2001);
- (iii) work in cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics on communication, including work by Clark and colleagues on communication as joint action, informed by research in traditions I and II (e.g., Clark 1994; Clark 2002); also other psycholinguistic studies that show how communication can break down, such as those on the ‘Moses illusion’ (see § 2.3 for references).

In communication theory, discussion of misunderstanding has tended to focus on the second of these strands, with attention also devoted to misunderstandings in specific situation types (e.g., in medical communication or in education: see below for references).² However there is consensus with much work in psychology, linguistics and philosophy that (i) communication is an inherently risky business; and (ii) participants in conversations are adept at providing each other with clues to their intended meaning and about what they take each other to mean.

1.2 What is misunderstanding?

This section sets out the boundaries of the topic that this paper is concerned with. Misunderstanding is not identical to communication failure, since to say that there is misunderstanding implies there is *apparent* understanding. To misunderstand is to think, or assume, that one understands, while not doing so, i.e. to come to a wrong understanding.

Conceptually there is a three-way contrast – and in practice, presumably, a continuum of cases – between (i) understanding (correctly), (ii) misunderstanding and (iii) complete failure to understand (Hirst, McRoy, Heeman, Edmonds & Horton 1994: 215; Weigand 1999: 769). In looking at misunderstanding we are dealing with cases where communication has failed at least to some degree, but where it seems, at least for a moment, and at least to the hearer, that it has succeeded.

Misunderstandings can also be categorised in another way: into those that are accidental – not intended by the speaker – and those that are intentional – where the speaker tries to induce a misunderstanding in the hearer.³ Searle’s famous example of an American captured by Italian soldiers in the second world war is of the latter type (Searle 1969: 44). The American utters a sentence of German poetry that he remembers which literally means ‘Do you know the land where the lemon

² See Laurence 1999 for an overview of work on misunderstanding in communication science.

³ Weigand (1999: 764–765) calls these ‘planned misunderstandings’.

trees bloom?', hoping that the soldiers will not know enough German to understand, but will recognise or guess that the language is German and wrongly infer that the soldier is German (and therefore let him go).

Such cases might seem to present some conceptual difficulty. The speaker intends the hearers to reach a certain interpretation of the utterance, and the hearers do indeed reach that interpretation, so we might wonder whether there is – strictly speaking – any misunderstanding here. But note that it would be natural for a hearer, on learning all the facts of the case, to say that he had been tricked into misunderstanding. One reason for this is that he ends up – as the speaker intends – with a false belief.

But the utterance is also deceptive in a deeper way. Consider a slightly different example: now the speaker is a real German amusing himself by playing a trick on the Italians, and they come to believe, truly, that he is German. Both in this case, and in the example as Searle presents it, the speaker wants the hearers to come to a certain conclusion *for the wrong reasons*, and thus they are cases of deceptive speech, notwithstanding the speaker's success in getting the hearers to believe exactly what she intended.⁴

Such examples fall into the category of deceptive and manipulative speech, which is dealt with in a separate paper in this volume (chapter 25). Therefore this paper focuses mainly on the more normal case of accidental misunderstanding.

We could say that misunderstanding *in* (verbal) communication is broader than misunderstanding *of* (verbal) communication – because not all misunderstandings in communication are misunderstandings of something that the speaker aimed to communicate.⁵ When we engage in verbal communication, we often infer more than the speaker's intended meaning. For example, I may infer from your manner or your way of speaking that you are nervous, or from Canada. Normally these would not be things that you intended to communicate in that way. In relevance theory this is called 'accidental information transmission' (Wilson & Sperber 1993: 4), and it is sharply distinguished from intentional communication. Now the hearer of an utterance might, hearing the speaker's way of speaking, *wrongly* infer that she is angry, or from the USA. It would not be straining the expression too much to call this a misunderstanding *in* verbal communication, but, if we accept the distinction between communication and accidental information transfer, we should not count it as a misunderstanding *of* verbal communication, since what was misunderstood was something that the speaker was not attempting to communicate. Searle's example exploits this borderline. The American hopes that the Ital-

⁴ There is an interesting parallel with the received view of knowledge in philosophy. It is generally accepted that it is not enough for a belief to be true for it to be knowledge; it must also have been reached in the right way or be held for good reason. See Steup 2005/2014 for an introduction.

⁵ A slightly different distinction is between misunderstanding of the utterance itself, and other misunderstandings that may attend conversation or other verbal communication.

ians will come to the conclusion that he is German as though he had given that fact away (by speaking in German) without intending to communicate it.

Theorists working in Gricean and post-Gricean pragmatics mostly make a clear distinction here. For example, according to relevance theory, there is a principle that governs the interpretation of utterances, the Communicative Principle: speakers try to tailor their utterances so that they are optimally relevant to the addressee. This principle guides the recovery of intended utterance meaning, but not the task of working out what else the speaker's behaviour/way of speaking might unintentionally imply. Here the hearer is on his own, as it were, without the help of the dedicated mental machinery for utterance comprehension ('the pragmatics module'). Inferences about information accidentally given away in communication will be on a level, in terms of the cognitive processes involved, with inferences about non-communicative actions. Misunderstanding is certainly possible here: e.g., thinking that someone is sitting down when she is reaching for something she dropped.⁶

Some other theorists, including most of those in the tradition of talk-in-interaction (see this volume, chapter 9), do not draw such a sharp line between communication and accidental information transfer,⁷ and this is reflected in work on miscommunication in these traditions, which does not explicitly distinguish misunderstandings that the speaker intended to communicate from other misunderstandings that may arise in (or through) communication. In the rest of this paper we will mainly be concerned with misunderstanding of the speaker's meaning, but cases in which the misunderstandings are more general ones about the speaker or the communicative situation are not ruled out of the discussion.

In summary, we need to be aware of the following distinctions:

1. between
 - a) misunderstanding,
 - b) (correct) understanding and
 - c) total communication failure
2. between
 - a) accidental misunderstanding and
 - b) speaker-intended misunderstanding.
3. between
 - a) misunderstanding in verbal communication and

⁶ This example is from Peter Handke's *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*: "She was about to sit down at a place where there was no chair and Block exclaimed: 'Look out!', but she had only crouched and picked up a coin that had fallen under the table when she was counting the money," (Zaefferer 1977: 30, fn. 3, trans. Zaefferer, modified by Allott).

⁷ For example, Schegloff uses the phrase "misunderstandings that occur between persons" (1987: 203) in a context that suggests that this (very broad) category is a focus of research in the CA tradition.

- b) misunderstanding in a general sense.⁸
(The former is a special case of the latter.)
- 4. between
 - a) misunderstanding of what the speaker intended to convey and
 - b) other misunderstandings that arise in communication.

1.3 Misunderstanding and theories of communication

There is no generally accepted theory of misunderstanding, and recent papers continue to propose radically new taxonomies both of the types of failure that occur in communication (e.g., Bosco, Bucciarelli & Bara 2006) and of their causes (e.g., compare Bazzanella & Damiano 1999 with Weigand 1999).

It might be that there is no theory of misunderstanding to be had, distinct from whatever turns out to be the true theory of communication, just as there is no theory of optical illusions distinct from theories of visual processing. It is certainly the case that theories of communication have implications for the study of misunderstanding. If we know more or less what has to go right for an utterance to be understood, then we have some guide to what may be going wrong in cases where an utterance is misunderstood.

Equally, examining misunderstanding will often shed light on how utterances are interpreted in cases where everything goes as it should. Zaefferer claims that “in all sciences having to do with systems it is a well-known fact that if one wants to get insight into how a system works, it is more revealing to regard instances of small malfunctions than examples of perfect functioning.” (1977: 329).⁹ It may be that, just as the study of optical illusions has been key to the study of visual processing, the study of misunderstanding will turn out to be vital for theories of communication.¹⁰

Section 2 of this paper summarizes the consensus in linguistic pragmatics (tradition I above) on what communication is and discusses the implications that current theories of communication have for what can go wrong. Section 3 turns to work on misunderstanding in talk-in-interaction and cross-cultural communication and to the research of Clark and colleagues (traditions II and III above) and sets out what has been established here, in particular about the way that participants in verbal interaction engage in near-constant maintenance and repair.

⁸ There is interesting work on misunderstanding in this broader sense, e.g., Perkins & Simmons, 1988.

⁹ Zaefferer's paper is an interesting attempt to treat linguistic misunderstanding in a decision-theoretic framework (1977). It does not belong to any of the bodies of work noted in the introduction or the conclusion, and seems to have been something of a theoretical dead end.

¹⁰ Conversely, Laurence (1999) argues that studying misunderstanding has occupied too central a place in much work on communication.

2 Cognition and misunderstanding in communication

Contemporary work in pragmatics treats communication as the implying – by the speaker – and inferring – by the hearer – of what it is that the speaker intends to convey. On this account, normally the best explanation for the speaker's production of an utterance is that she intended to convey certain propositions and attitudes. Thus each utterance is a deliberate clue to the speaker's meaning-intentions, and the hearer's task is to infer those intentions, working back from what has been uttered. This picture of communication derives from the philosopher Paul Grice's work on speaker meaning (1957) and on conversational maxims and implicatures (1975), and is shared in its essentials by most work in linguistic pragmatics in recent decades, including neo-Gricean accounts (e.g., Horn 1988; Levinson 2000), relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986; Carston 2002), some psycholinguists such as Clark (1996), and influential philosophers of language: e.g., Kent Bach (2004) and François Recanati (2010).

2.1 The code model and the inferential model

Sperber and Wilson (1986: 1–15, 24–28) have pointed out that Grice's work is a radical break with what they call the 'code model' of communication. According to the code model, communication is simply a matter of encoding, transmission and decoding. The speaker has in mind some content that she wants to communicate, and utters a sentence that linguistically encodes it. The hearer decodes this linguistic material and recovers the content. The fundamentals of this model are subscribed to, often implicitly, in a vast range of research, from work in the mathematical theory of information (Shannon 1948) to the semiotic programme which has been influential in various humanities disciplines (e.g., de Saussure 1974: 16; Leach 1976: 10; both quoted at Sperber & Wilson 1986: 7).

If verbal communication were accurately described by the code model, then misunderstanding could only occur as a result of: a) lack of a shared code; b) noise in the channel so that the message is not transmitted accurately; or c) an error in encoding or decoding. Conversely, if the code is shared, and the message is encoded properly, received by the hearer as it was sent, and decoded properly, then (according to the code model) misunderstanding cannot occur.

Some studies of misunderstanding have adopted one version or other of the code model. Its influence can be clearly seen in Bourdieu and Passeron's study of linguistic misunderstanding and power in university education, when they write that "Learning implies acquiring both knowledge itself and the code of transmission used to convey a particular body of knowledge. The code cannot be learnt except through a progressively less unskilled decoding of messages." (Bourdieu &

Passeron 1994: 5). In Zaefferer's work on misunderstanding, his definition of full understanding (Zaefferer 1977: 331) entails a sophisticated version of the code model, according to which each sentence-context pair conventionally encodes the full meaning that is communicated. (See Sperber & Wilson 1986: 26–7, 174 for criticism of such variants of the model.) Thus, according to Zaefferer, misunderstandings that are not due to simple mishearing can only be due to a mismatch between the encoding and decoding languages, or a misidentification of the context¹¹ (Zaefferer 1977: 332).

The inferential model, in contrast, claims that communication is inherently risky, because it involves uncertain (non-demonstrative) inferences. On this account, verbal communication is, conceptually, a two-stage process. Language is a code, so the hearer of an utterance must decode the sentence uttered. But that does not end the hearer's task, because the sentence uttered does not in general fully encode what the speaker intended to convey: rather, it serves as a structured clue to the speaker's meaning. So the hearer has to infer what is the best explanation of the fact that the speaker has uttered a certain sentence, in a certain way, in certain circumstances. According to this picture, although verbal communication (by definition) involves natural language, which is a code, it is fundamentally an inferential process. The argument, briefly, is that a) purely gestural, code-free communication is possible, and b) in verbal communication, what is meant generally outstrips what is encoded. It follows that human communication requires inference but not codes. Of course, the use of natural language as a code allows much more precise communication and communication about topics that would be difficult or impossible in its absence (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 174–175; see this volume, chapter 6). Still, in utterance interpretation, linguistic decoding is in principle just an input to the main task, namely inferring the speaker's intended meaning.

According to relevance theory, this inferential model implies that there is a cognitive process of trial-and-error search for a satisfactory interpretation. The hearer – or, it is perhaps better to say, the part of his mind which deals with utterance interpretation: his 'pragmatics module' (Wilson 2000: 130–136) – has to entertain a hypothesis about what the speaker intended to convey and accept or reject it. If the initial hypothesis is rejected, then another must be generated and evaluated, until one is accepted or the attempt is given up and no interpretation of the utterance is found. There can be no guarantee that the hypothesis that the hearer accepts will be correct. As Deirdre Wilson writes:

Precisely because utterance interpretation is not a simple matter of decoding, but a fallible process of hypothesis formation and evaluation, there is no guarantee that the interpretation that satisfies the hearer's expectation of relevance will be the correct, i.e. the intended one. Because of mismatches in their memories and perceptual systems, the hearer may overlook a

¹¹ Errors in encoding and decoding should also be on the list, *pace* Zaefferer.

hypothesis that the speaker thought would be highly salient, or notice a hypothesis that the speaker had overlooked. Misunderstandings occur. (Wilson 1994: 47)

2.2 Components of utterance meaning

Wilson argues that there are four types of information that speakers intend to convey, and which hearers, therefore, must in general infer in order to correctly understand an utterance: (i) what proposition the speaker intended to express (for example, what she intended to assert, in the case of utterances that are assertions); (ii) what the speaker intended to imply; (iii) what the speaker's attitude was to what she expressed and implied; and – most fundamentally – (iv) what contextual assumptions the speaker intended the hearer to entertain. These components of what speakers communicate are explained in turn below. Misunderstanding can involve failure on any of these components and any combination of them.

2.2.1 The proposition expressed

In recent years there has been a great deal of work on “ways in which encoded linguistic meaning may underdetermine the proposition a speaker expresses by her utterance of a particular linguistic string” (Carston 2002: 28), where the term ‘proposition’ is used in the philosophers’ sense: something that is true or false. In the case of an assertion, the *proposition expressed* by the speaker is whatever it is that she claims to be true. For example, the speaker of (1) below might have intended to claim that she has produced a kind of box for her addressee's cricket bat. But since both ‘make the case’ and ‘bat’ are ambiguous, the sentence could also be uttered with the intention of claiming that she has argued in favour of the hearer's proposal to keep a mammal of the order *Chiroptera* as a pet. (Since there are two loci of ambiguity, there are at least four possible interpretations, the remaining two of which are left to the reader as an exercise.) Given that there is more than one possible interpretation for the sounds uttered, we can say that the utterance ‘underdetermines’ the intended interpretation: that is, it does not fix an interpretation, but it does provide some constraints or guidance on possible interpretations.

Lexical ambiguity is only one possible reason for linguistic underdeterminacy; and it is controversial how best to categorise the different types of case. The list that follows is partly based on one at (Carston 2002: 28). Each type is discussed below, with an example or examples, and the terminology used in the list is explained.

There is no unique proposition encoded:

1. ambiguity
2. indexical references
3. ‘missing’ constituents

There is a proposition encoded (arguably) but it is not the proposition expressed:

4. quantifier domain restriction
5. free enrichment
6. word(s) used to express *ad hoc* concept

When the linguistic material uttered falls short of determining the proposition expressed then there must be inferential work to do, so each of the six types of case listed above is an opening for potential misunderstanding. They are briefly illustrated here, in order.

Ambiguity

A sentence as spoken (/written) is a string of sounds (/graphemes), and the vast majority of utterances in verbal communication are of ambiguous strings. Whether the ambiguity is lexical (both ‘case’ and ‘bat’ are lexically ambiguous; ‘make’ is polysemous) as in (1a), or structural as in (1b), the potential problem is the same. The hearer has to disambiguate – i.e. infer which sense was intended – and may get it wrong.

- (1) a. I’ve made the case for your bat.
b. Do you see the man eating fish over there?
(Zaeffner 1977: 333)

Indexicality

The second kind of underspecification is the use of *indexical* terms: that is words and phrases such as ‘she’, ‘over there’, and ‘that time’, whose role is to allow the speaker to refer to different people, places, times etc.. An indexical does not encode its referent, in contrast to a name or description (e.g., compare the indexical, ‘he’, with ‘Simon Rattle’ and ‘the principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic’), so the hearer has to infer to what or to whom the speaker intended to refer. Schegloff gives an attested example where this goes wrong:

- (2) A: Which one::s are closed, an’ which ones are open.
Z: ((pointing to map)) Most of ‘em. This, this, this, this
A: I don’t mean on the shelters, I mean on the roads.
Z: Oh!
(Schegloff 1987: 204)

The problem here is that Z misunderstands what A intended to refer to by ‘ones’ in his first utterance.

‘Missing’ constituents

The sentences in (3) exemplify the third source of underspecification. They do not determine a proposition even after disambiguation and reference assignment. In

interpreting (3a) the hearer has to infer what paracetamol is better than, in the speaker's opinion. With (3b) the question is 'Too young for what?' In both cases it is as though the sentence were missing a part or 'constituent'.

- (3) a. Paracetamol is better.
 b. He is too young.
 (Carston 2002: 22)

Quantifier domain

Quantifiers are words such as 'all', 'some', 'most', 'everyone', 'somewhere' and 'nothing'. The *domain* of a quantifier is the class of entities that it 'ranges over', that is, the ones that are in consideration, in some sense. For example, 'I've got nothing to wear' might be used to mean nothing *suitable* to wear, in which case the domain of the quantifier is 'restricted' to suitable things and does not range over absolutely all things. Conversely, when Parmenides said 'Nothing comes from nothing' he presumably intended the quantifiers to range over absolutely all types of thing: their domain was unrestricted.

When a speaker uses a quantifier, the hearer has to infer the intended domain, or misunderstanding will result, as illustrated by one of Schegloff's recorded examples, (4):

- (4) A: Well I'd like tuh see you very much.
 B: Yes. Uh
 A: I really would. We c'd have a bite,
 en (ta::lk),
 B: Yeh.
 B: Weh – No! No, don't prepare anything.
 A: And uh – I'm not going
 to prepare, we'll juz whatever it'll be, we'll
 B: No!
 I don't mean that. I min – because uh, she en I'll prob'ly uh be spending the
 day togethuh, so uh:: we'll go out tuh lunch or something like that, -hh So I
 mean if you:: uh have a cuppa coffee or something, I mean that uh that'll be
 fine. But uh
 A: Yeah Fine.
 (Schegloff 1987: 205)

When B tells A not to 'prepare anything', A seems to understand that as 'preparing something fancy' (Schegloff 1987: 205). But this is a partial *misunderstanding*, as B's response makes clear, because what B meant was that A should not prepare anything more special than a cup of coffee. Another possible interpretation (which may have been the one A entertained, *pace* Schegloff: it's difficult to tell from the evidence of the transcript) would be to take the quantifier as unrestricted: that is,

A may have thought that B meant *Don't prepare anything at all*. Either way, the restriction of the domain of 'anything' that A inferred was not the one intended by B and there was misunderstanding (soon repaired).

Free enrichment

There has been much debate about cases such as (5):

- (5) I've often been at the Japanese ambassador's parties, but I've never had sushi.
(Modelled on an example at Wilson & Sperber 2002: 611.)

This could be uttered to convey that the speaker has never had sushi *at all* or to convey that she has never had sushi *at the Japanese ambassador's parties*. In the second case, the proposition expressed seems to have been 'freely enriched': it has a component (for the place of eating) for which the sentence has no corresponding constituent. The analysis of such examples is controversial, and some theorists prefer an account in terms of unpronounced indexicals in the linguistic structure, so that, for example, the pronounced 'have had sushi' would be accompanied by unpronounced variables for time, place and perhaps manner of eating, each of which must be assigned a value. Whether what is involved is 'free enrichment' or the assignment of a value to a tacit variable, the hearer has to work out which interpretation was intended, since in either case the information is not explicitly present in what is uttered by the speaker.

Ad hoc concepts

The last of the varieties of underspecification listed above is illustrated in (6). Here the speaker uses a word ('ten' in 6a, 'saint' in 6b) intending to convey an occasion-specific meaning (or '*ad hoc* concept': Carston 1997; Sperber & Wilson 1998) different from the concept that the word encodes.

- (6) a. The train leaves at ten.
b. John will carry your bags: he's a saint.

In loose use the concept conveyed is less specific than the encoded concept. For example, the hearer of an utterance of (6a) needs to work out whether the speaker actually meant *ten sharp*, or (more likely) something looser, and how loose.

The *ad hoc* concept analysis has also been applied to metaphor (Carston 1997; Bezuidenhout 2001), as in (6b), where the speaker has to work out what the speaker meant by 'saint' – surely not the literal meaning, but something like *an individual who is helpful to an unusual, perhaps self-sacrificing, degree*. There is great scope here for partial misunderstanding. A hearer of (6b), for example, is unlikely to be able to work out what degree of 'sainthood' the speaker intends, or whether the speaker wants to communicate something precise or something vague.

2.2.2 Implicatures

'Implicature' is the generally-accepted term (coined by Grice 1975) for intentionally implied utterance content. Consider something that Margaret Thatcher said in an interview while she was British prime minister, (7):

- (7) I always treat other people's money as if it were my own.
(Wilson 1994: 39)

As Wilson says, what Thatcher intended to *say* is clear enough, but a crucial part of what Thatcher wanted to communicate was what she intended to *imply*: that she treats other people's money with great care, is parsimonious with it etc. However, her utterance can easily be misunderstood as implicating that she spends other people's money on herself.

What the hearer will take Thatcher to implicate here depends on what assumptions he adopts. If he assumes that she treats her own money with great care then he will reach her intended interpretation, while other assumptions will lead to misunderstanding.

2.2.3 Attitudes

The hearer also has to work out what the speaker's attitude is to the proposition expressed and to what she implicates:

Is she endorsing these propositions or dissociating herself from them; is she asserting that they are true, wondering whether they are true, perhaps wishing or hoping that someone will make them true? To a certain extent, these attitudes can be linguistically encoded (e.g., by declarative, interrogative or imperative syntax), but ... in this aspect of interpretation as in any other, what is communicated generally goes well beyond what is linguistically encoded. (Wilson 1994: 41)

For example, it may be part of what the speaker intends to communicate in uttering (8) that she means it as a promise (rather than, say, a threat, or a prediction).¹² This is a difference in *illocutionary force*, a term coined by Austin in work (1962) which drew attention to the different types of actions that could be performed in making an utterance; illocutionary force has been the focus of the majority of subsequent work on speech acts (e.g., Searle 1969; Searle 1976; Bach & Harnish 1979).

- (8) I'll be back later.

¹² Schegloff (1987: 209) gives an attested example of misunderstanding of illocutionary force, where a description is misunderstood as a criticism or complaint.

In irony, the speaker says (or seems to say) something which she does not endorse – which in fact she finds ridiculous. As a result, it is notoriously easy to misunderstand ironic utterances. For example, the sentence in (9) could be uttered ironically or meant sincerely:

(9) What a lovely shirt!

In such cases, intonation or non-verbal cues (Wilson & Sperber 2012: 123, 128) may help, and what the hearer knows about the speaker's beliefs and preferences may – but may not – make it clear whether the utterance was intended sincerely or ironically.

Much less scholarly attention has been paid to the speaker's attitude to implied utterance content. Wilson discusses the following example:

- (10) a. Peter: Is John a good cook?
 b. Mary: He's English.
 (Wilson 1994: 11)

Mary expresses the proposition that John is English and implicates that he is a bad cook – relying on widely available contextual assumptions about the quality of English food. As Wilson says, Mary clearly commits herself to John's being English: she would be taken to have lied if it turned out that she knew that he wasn't. On the other hand, it is not clear what her attitude is to the proposition that he is a bad cook. She obviously intends to communicate it, but perhaps playfully, rather than seriously. To fully understand Mary's utterance, Peter has to work out her attitude to this implication as well as her attitude to the basic proposition expressed. In such cases, partial misunderstanding is far from unlikely.

2.2.4 Contextual assumptions

Several of the examples above indicate that bringing to bear the right assumptions is crucial to getting the right interpretation. For example, once the hearer works out what assumptions Thatcher intended in example (7), the intended implicature follows logically. Conversely, using the wrong assumptions is almost certain to cause misunderstanding. Assumptions of this sort are called 'contextual assumptions' in relevance theory, since they are not encoded by the linguistic material uttered, but must be worked out from the context.

Obviously, a key question is how the hearer knows which contextual assumptions the speaker intends him to use¹³. These assumptions have several sources,

¹³ A question which has received too little attention is whether intended contextual assumptions are part of what the speaker intentionally and overtly conveys (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 194) or

including preceding text, knowledge about the speaker, and general knowledge (Wilson 1994: 41).

The inherent riskiness and fallibility of communication certainly applies to the recovery of the intended contextual assumptions. There is no guarantee that the hearer will be right about these any more than about the other components of the intended interpretation.

Still we do manage to understand each other much of the time. Hearers and speakers have a great deal in common, as human beings and often as members of a shared culture, so they will typically have access to many shared assumptions. In addition, speakers are good at tailoring their utterances to the hearer's knowledge and abilities, and hearers can therefore work on the basis that the utterance will be a good clue to what the speaker wanted to convey, or at least that the speaker will have tried to make it a good clue.

In Grice's theory of conversation this tailoring of the utterance is described as the conformance of speakers with a Cooperative Principle and a set of conversational maxims. Other pragmatic theories postulate different constraints on speakers and hearers: relevance theory's Communicative Principle, for example, mentioned above.

2.3 Expectations and top-down effects

The hearer's expectations about what the speaker might want to convey play an important role in communication. For example, in trying to understand Thatcher's utterance of (7), you might have initially entertained the wrong interpretation, but rejected it because it is incompatible with your beliefs about the sort of thing that the prime minister would have wanted to convey.

We expect responses to questions to be answers (although this expectation is fallible), so, for example, Mary is likely to work on the assumption that Peter's utterance in (11) is intended to imply that John is not going to the wedding. Working backwards, she will be able to infer that 'he' refers to John, rather than Frank, Tim or another male individual, that John is too ill to go to the wedding, rather than, e.g., to play tennis, and that 'now' refers to a period of days at least.

(11) Mary: Is John going to Frank and Tim's wedding?

Peter: He's too ill now.

Our expectations and background knowledge can outweigh what is linguistically encoded. It is possible to infer what the speaker intended to convey even if the

whether while essential to understanding what the speaker means, they are not themselves part of utterance content (Recanati 2004: 48–49).

speaker accidentally uses a wrong word, or parts of the utterance are lost in noise. For example, an utterance of (12) might be correctly understood as an attempt to say that the speaker was feeding *pigeons*, because the hearer knows that there are – usually – no penguins in Trafalgar Square. Of course, such inferences are risky – the speaker might really have intended to say that she was feeding penguins – but they make communication less ‘brittle’ than it would be if it were purely a matter of encoding and decoding.

(12) I was feeding penguins in Trafalgar Square.

There is evidence from psycholinguistics that top-down influences play a strong role and can override what is encoded. In experiments that present items like (13), participants mostly fail to notice the anomaly, presumably because they are engaged in producing an answer to the question that they think they have been asked.

(13) How many animals of each kind did Moses take into the ark?

This is the ‘Moses illusion’ (Erickson & Mattson 1981; van Oostendorp & De Mul 1990), mentioned in the introduction.

3 Social aspects of communication and misunderstanding

There are two ways in which work on misunderstanding has focussed on groups larger than the individual. The first is a view of talk exchanges as something that the participants make together: a joint product of joint action. On this account, which has been the focus of inquiry by Herb Clark and colleagues (work listed under area III in the introduction), misunderstandings are joint problems that require joint solutions:

when Bob does not understand Ann, the problem is not his alone, or hers alone. It is Ann-and-Bob’s, and it takes the two of them working together to fix it. (Clark 1994: 244; see also Clark & Schaefer 1989: 263 ff.)

This work is discussed in section 3.2 below.

3.1 Cross-cultural communication and misunderstanding

The second way in which a great deal of work on misunderstanding focusses on groups of people is the interest that has been shown in misunderstandings that are

related to social or cultural differences (listed as tradition II in the introduction). As Schegloff writes,

The misunderstanding which has been the focus [of work in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis] has not been that between individuals, although individual participants are, of course, always involved. (Schegloff 1987: 201)

This research has focussed on

... misunderstandings whose sources of trouble transcended the individual and were rooted in groups or allegiances which confer on the individual some specific social or cultural identity, and/or armed or saddled the individual with related resources for speaking, hearing, understanding, and interacting which contribute to misunderstanding ... (Schegloff 1987: 201)

The types of difference between groups of people that researchers have been interested in include national and regional identities, membership of a 'speech community', social class, ethnicity and 'race', sex, age and generation, and work and professional affiliation (Schegloff 1987: 202). As Schegloff points out, these affiliations often overlap, "as when studies of classrooms focus on the troubles that can arise when young 'lower-class' black/chicano students have to cope with anglo-middle-class middle-aged teachers." (Schegloff 1987: 202)

There has been a tendency in research on cross-cultural communication to conflate the roles played in misunderstanding by linguistic differences and non-linguistic cultural differences. Indeed some researchers have argued that it is wrong in principle to distinguish between cultural and linguistic differences in communication:

For example, Gumperz writes:

... socio-cultural conventions affect all levels of speech production and interpretation [...] we must abandon the existing views of communication which draw a basic distinction between cultural or social knowledge on the one hand and linguistic signalling processes on the other. (Gumperz 1982a: 186, endorsed by Weigand 1999: 764)

This is in contrast with theories (e.g., relevance theory, discussed above) which distinguish linguistic knowledge from non-linguistic assumptions. On such accounts, linguistic differences between speaker and hearer are most likely to cause problems with the encoding/decoding of the sentence uttered, while non-linguistic cultural differences are likely to lead to misunderstanding through discrepancy in which assumptions are available to speaker and hearer, or in the differential accessibility of assumptions.

Of course there are some differences that are both linguistic and cultural. For example, professional in-groups such as medical or legal professionals have both special knowledge of their area and specialised terminology in which this knowledge is couched, and it might be difficult to separate the two in discussions of misunderstandings between professionals and laypeople.

It may also be that impatience with distinctions of this sort has been partly driven by the urgency of the task of drawing attention to injustices that are fuelled by power imbalances. In the face of repression such distinctions may seem academic (in the pejorative sense):

[Something that] adds a note of urgency and commitment to this line ... of inquiry, [...] is that these encounters across group boundaries are seen to work to [...] the unfair and unjust disadvantage – of one of the participants [...]. It is not, then, just that one person is misunderstood by another, but that the child is misunderstood by the teacher, the woman by the man, the black by the white, the Indian by the Briton, the welfare recipient or juvenile delinquent by the social worker – in each case one with lesser (or virtually no) power by one with more or much power (Schegloff 1987: 202)

The results of work on cross-cultural communication are hard to summarise, because the research has mostly been concerned with bringing out the details of actual communication and misunderstanding. Many practitioners make audio – and, more recently, video – recordings of interaction, and work with transcriptions that aim to capture a high level of detail, including pauses, variant pronunciations, overlaps and other characteristic features of actual speech and verbal interaction. The examples from Schegloff given above (in section 2.2.1) are typical in this respect.

3.2 Maintenance and repair

One focus of the talk-in-interaction tradition that has a strong bearing on misunderstanding is the research on *repair*, that is “practices for dealing with problems or troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk in conversation (and in other forms of talk-in-interaction ...)” (Schegloff 2000: 207).¹⁴

Whether a misunderstanding is noticed and if so, by which party to a conversation, has implications for whether and how the problem is addressed as the conversation progresses. For example, in a conversation between two individuals, A and B, suppose that A makes an utterance (a ‘turn’ in the terminology of CA) and that B responds with an utterance (the second turn) which reveals to A that B has misunderstood A’s original utterance. A has an opportunity in the next (i.e. third) turn to “perfor[m] some operation on the ... trouble-source turn” e.g., by saying “No, I don’t mean X, I mean Y” (Schegloff 1987: 203). This is an example of what has been called ‘third-turn’ (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977: 366, 375) or ‘third-position’ repair (Schegloff 1987: 203). Examples (2) and (4), above are of this type.

¹⁴ Not all repair is correction of misunderstanding: other-repair often targets problems with hearing, and self-repair is often aimed at problems with speaking. See Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977: 361, 379–80.

Alternatively, the speaker may notice as she is speaking that there is a problem and correct it immediately (Jefferson 1974), as Naomi does in reformulating her question in example (14):

- (14) Naomi: But c'd we – c'd I stay u:p? (0.2) once we get // ho:me
(Extracted from longer example at Schegloff et al. 1977: 366.)

This may be called 'same-turn' repair. Often such self-corrections are signalled by 'editing terms' (Levelt 1983) such as 'uh you know' and 'I mean' in example (15):

- (15) Jane: this is the funny thing about academics, -. that if you're no- u:h
you know, I I've. come to it, so late, . I mean I've had a lifetime of
experience, rolling around,
(Clark 1994: 249)

Both this and third-turn repair are examples of 'self-initiated' repairs. These contrast with 'other-initiated' repairs, where the addressee of the troublesome utterance is the one who starts the repair process, typically by asking for clarification, as in (16a), or by offering a tentative interpretation, as Dar does in (16b):

- (16) a. F: This is nice, did you make this?
K: No, Samu made that.
F: Who?
K: Samu
(Schegloff et al. 1977: 367–368)
- b. Sam: well wo uh what shall we do about uh this boy then
Dar: Duveen
Sam: m
Dar: well I propose to write, uh saying . I'm very sorry [continues]
(Clark 1994: 249)

Initially, it was claimed that "that virtually all repair initiated by other than speaker of the trouble-source turn was initiated in the turn following the trouble-source turn" (Schegloff 2000: 205), but this claim has been abandoned in favour of a more complex picture of other-initiated repair that can be delayed to later turns (Schegloff 2000).

In an important paper, Herb Clark argues that the "common view of conversation [according to which] the participants manage the problems they encounter by monitoring for them and by repairing them when they arise[. ...] is too narrow," (Clark 1994: 243) and that:

... speakers do more than make repairs. They have strategies for preventing certain problems from arising at all. For problems that are unavoidable, they have strategies for warning their

partners to help them prepare for the problems. And for problems that arise anyway, they work with their partners in repairing them. In the management of problems, preventatives are preferred to warnings. Repairs are the last resort. (Clark 1994: 243)

Devices that may prevent and at least warn include the pronunciation of ‘the’ as /ði:/ rather than /ðə/ when there is a problem in formulating an upcoming noun phrase (Fox Tree & Clark 1997) and the use of ‘uh’ and ‘um’ to signal that an interruption will follow. Clark and colleagues have shown that ‘uh’ more often precedes short interruptions, ‘um’ longer ones (Smith & Clark 1993; Clark & Fox Tree 2002). Speakers also produce *hedges* such as ‘sort of’, ‘kind of’ and ‘like’ to signal that they are being imprecise (Wade & Clark 1993). Clark argues that first-turn corrections, as in (17), are preventatives as well as repairs: “although they repair one problem, they prevent deeper and more costly misunderstandings down the line” (Clark 1994: 247).

Sacks et al. claimed that “[r]egularly ... a turn’s talk will display its speaker’s understanding of a prior turn’s talk, and whatever other talk it marks itself as directed to” (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: 728). In particular, speakers often “show not only how they understood the last speaker’s turn, but also that they understand that the last speaker understood the turn before that one” (Laurence 1999: 279, summarising Sacks 1992: 719). Clark and colleagues have shown that participants in a conversation actively check that understanding is being achieved (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986; Clark & Schaefer 1989; Wilkes-Gibbs & Clark 1992; Brennan & Clark 1996; Clark & Krych 2004): “speakers ... monitor addressees for understanding and, when necessary, alter their utterances in progress. Addressees cooperate by displaying and signaling their understanding in progress” (Clark & Krych 2004: 62).

4 Concluding remarks

This paper has set out the ‘state of the art’ in the study of misunderstanding, discussing work across several different areas of research. There is no dominant theory of misunderstanding – perhaps because possible causes of breakdown in communication are too disparate. Moreover, sharp theoretical and methodological differences between research traditions can make it difficult to say what consensus exists. However, the work discussed in the previous section coheres well with the main findings of section 2 above. Given that communication is inherently risky, a) speakers maximise their chance of being understood by tailoring utterances to the hearer, anticipating and trying to head off problems; and b) participants in a conversation demonstrate that, and how, they have understood, and monitor each other’s comprehension.

On the cognitive side, it seems reasonable to hope that advances in theories of the mental processes involved in communication will shed light on misunderstand-

ing. In the study of misunderstanding as a social phenomenon, quite basic facts are still unknown. For example, there are no statistics on how frequent misunderstanding is (Dascal 1999: 754) nor on what it correlates with (e.g., degree of social difference).¹⁵

The importance of misunderstanding in communication and the fragmented state of current understanding are reflected in the fact that relevant – but less central – research has also been carried out in several areas not discussed in this paper:

- (i) work on misunderstanding in studies by computer scientists attempting to model dialogue (e.g., Hirst et al. 1994);
- (ii) the study of sentence parsing and how it can go wrong in, e.g., garden-pathing (Dowty, Karttunen & Zwicky 1985);
- (iii) work on misunderstandings in second-language teaching and acquisition (e.g., Thomas 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986)
- (iv) work in psychology on framing effects, and, particularly, on whether poor performance in reasoning tasks is due to participants' misunderstanding of the task (e.g., Fiedler 1988; Newstead, Pollard, Evans & Allen 1992; Tentori, Bonini & Osherson 2004);
- (v) two related literatures in medical and psychological journals on misunderstandings between doctors and patients and between medical researchers and participants (Blake, Weber & Fletcher 2004; Dixon-Woods et al. 2007; Schober, Conrad & Fricker 2004);
- (vi) the study of 'slips of the ear' i.e. misperceptions such as 'carcinoma' for 'Barcelona' (Fromkin 1980).

There is also relevant work falling outside, or between, these areas, such as Elinor Ochs' survey, from the perspective of social psychology, of misunderstanding in childhood language development (Ochs 1991). Finally, there are numerous popular articles and books on misunderstanding in communication (e.g., Tannen 1991; Halvorson 2011), demonstrating that the topic is of considerable interest to non-specialists.

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¹⁵ One reason for the neglect of statistical analysis might be Schegloff's (1993) view that it is premature to attempt quantitative work in this area.

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25 Deceptive and uncooperative verbal communication

Abstract: In this chapter, we address verbal communication in non-cooperative contexts, especially deceptive, ideological and fallacious communication. We first review the main traditions that have studied this issue: ancient Rhetoric, contemporary Argumentation Theory, Communication Science, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Pragmatics, from Grice to Cognitive linguistics. We dedicate particular attention to contemporary post-Gricean Pragmatics and to its links with research in Psychology on cognitive heuristics. The notion of *epistemic vigilance* is addressed in the section dedicated to applications, where the social aspects of deceptive verbal communication are also developed.

Keywords: deception, fallacies, persuasion, heuristics, critical discourse analysis, argumentation theory, rhetoric, epistemic vigilance

1 Introduction

The phenomenon of deceptive and uncooperative communication is among those phenomena that call for interdisciplinary inquiry. Owing to its complexity – it is psychologically, sociologically, politically, ethically and linguistically significant (among some of its relevant dimensions) –, its study involves a variety of research questions which can be approached from a number of different disciplines and frameworks. Since we will be concerned with the linguistic and discursive aspects of deception, the focus of this chapter will be on deceptive and uncooperative *verbal* communication. Its purpose is targeted at reviewing and discussing five fields of scientific inquiry which have been used to approach deceptive verbal communication, namely linguistic pragmatics, communication studies, (critical) discourse analysis, argumentation theory and cognitive pragmatics; the discussion will also deal with the requirements an explanatory account of how verbal deception works should fulfil. To the extent that we will focus on communicative settings, we will furthermore be led to evoke both social and cognitive aspects of deception.

Linguistic pragmatics, within the strand originating in the works of Herbert Paul Grice, is particularly relevant to the study of deceptive communication, mainly because of Grice's clearly delineated cooperative principle (1989 [1975]) which is taken to regulate how people communicate with each other and make sense of verbal utterances. Resorting to his work seems *a priori* a sound enterprise, to the extent that once cooperation is defined, what non-cooperation amounts to can *ipso*

facto also be identified, which can accordingly constitute a first step in an attempt to characterise verbal deception.

Within Communication Science, deception has attracted a great deal of attention over the past four decades (see Levine & Kim 2010 for a comprehensive overview). Questions such as the definition of deception and its relationship to lying, deception prevalence, deception motives and deception detection have given rise to abundant studies, sometimes informed by neuroscience, which have in turn contributed a great deal to our understanding of the reasons people deceive others and their (very) relative ability to spot deceivers.

The study of the social and political implications of verbal deception, notably in terms of discrimination and ideology (re)production/propagation, has traditionally been the province of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), whose origin can be traced back to the movement referred to as Critical Linguistics and which was initiated in the 1970s by the seminal work of Roger Fowler, Gunther Kress, Bob Hodge and Tony Trew (Fowler et al. 1979). Although the focus of this research programme is not verbal deception proper (to the exception of van Dijk's (2006) paper on manipulation), an underlying assumption of CDA research is that language is the vehicle of ideology, which is covertly communicated and contributes to enforcing and reproducing actual power relations. In this sense, CDA nourishes socio-political ambitions and takes linguistic theory as a means to debunk and expose how ideology is (sometimes explicitly, but most of the time implicitly) verbally conveyed in discourse. CDA has recently undertaken a cognitive turn by incorporating cognitive considerations about language processing (notably through the study of metaphor and of its persuasive power, see e.g., Chilton 1994, 2005; Hart 2010) and is therefore nowadays informed and enriched by psychologically-grounded models of human cognition.

Verbal deception oftentimes takes the form of fallacious argumentation, by managing to get addressees to accept insufficiently or ill-evidenced conclusions. While the Western roots of the study of argumentation lie within Aristotle's work and still continue to inspire generations of contemporary researchers, a number of theories tackling the distinction between sound and fallacious argumentation are nowadays available; their normative input is of particular relevance to any approach to verbal deception interested in the study of how people manage to mislead their audiences through argumentative means.

A fifth, more contemporary, area of research around deceptive communication is the cognitive pragmatic approach. Scholars working within this framework take a cognitive perspective on verbal information processing to argue that deception constrains verbal comprehension so as to divert the targets' attention from mobilising information that would allow them to identify the deceptive intent. In other words, this perspective seeks to precisely characterise what it means cognitively for information to be foregrounded or backgrounded. The main theoretical resource researchers in this paradigm make use of is Sperber & Wilson's Relevance Theory.

The remainder of this chapter will be divided in 3 sections: section 2 will spell out the general features of each of these five approaches and their respective contribution to the study of deceptive verbal communication; Section 3 will evoke some of the applications of research on verbal deception; the conclusion will summarise the main points of the chapter and mention further directions of research.

2 Studying deceptive and uncooperative verbal communication

2.1 Linguistic Pragmatics: Grice's model

The Oxonian philosopher of language H. P. Grice is considered to be one of the founders of pragmatics, i.e. the scientific study of language in use, of contextual meaning and understanding. Originally interested in accounting for how people are routinely able to understand each other without much difficulty despite the fact that sentences usually express literally much less or different things than what is actually conveyed, Grice was mostly interested by implicit meaning and offered a mixed explanation – conventional and cognitive-intentional – as to how humans grasp implicit meaning. His research was seminal for other scholars who further tackled semantic underdeterminacy, i.e. the intrinsic ambiguity of sentences across contexts, and who offered a variety of elaborations, either by assuming a default level of interpretation (they are referred to as ‘neo-Griceans’, such as Horn and Levinson) or by reducing the apparatus to a basic cognitive principle (these are referred to as ‘post-Griceans’ and include scholars such as Sperber & Wilson and Carston; see Carston 2002 for a detailed discussion).

Grice developed an account of communicative rationality postulating that language users adopt linguistically cooperative behaviour. His *cooperative principle* (“Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk in which you are engaged”, Grice [1975] 1989: 26) requires interlocutors to observe a number of principles called *maxims*: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner, which enjoin speakers to respectively provide as much information as required, to be truthful and not to assert that for which they lack evidence, to be relevant and to be perspicuous. When speakers observe these maxims (or *overtly* fail to observe them for the purpose of triggering a specific implicit meaning) they are deemed to be cooperative communicators, thereby ensuring a “maximally effective exchange of information” (Grice 1989: 28). Conversational participants are said to expect each other to comply with these principles and this is taken to account for the possibility of verbal communication, both explicit and implicit.

Communication, under Grice's terms, is defined as *intentional*. The mere existence of implicit meaning is perhaps the clearest indication that language users,

in the process of comprehension, do much more than simply decode the literal meaning of the words that were uttered by the speaker and that they actually process them in a more elaborate way. Take for instance example (1):

- (1) A: Where is Brian?
 B: I just saw his car parked on the driveway in front of his house.
- (2) Brian is at home

In (1), A formulates a question to find out about Brian's whereabouts. B, instead of giving a concise answer in the form of a precise location, tells A where Brian's car is. While literally unrelated to the question (the question is about Brian, not about his car), B's answer leads A to infer (2), namely that Brian is at home, by inviting A to mobilise background information, among which the fact that when someone's car is parked in front of the house the person is likely to be at home. A is quite effortlessly able to infer this implicit meaning; despite superficial irrelevance in B's answer, the assumption that B is cooperative and produces information that is consistent with the cooperative principle and the conversational maxims allows A to infer (2), an implicit part of meaning which Grice named *implicature*.¹ This goes on to show that addressees in fact aim at recovering the *intentions* with which their interlocutors formulated their utterances in order to calculate the meaning of the latter. They are thus fully capable of distinguishing irony, metaphor and many other types of implicit meaning from the semantic content of the expressions used to convey them. The derivation of meaning can consequently be characterised as an inferential process which takes the literal meaning of the sentence as input and considers its implications in the present talk exchange, assuming that the speaker is cooperative, that is, for example, that what she says in the end fulfils the hearer's expectations in this respect. Thus, the conclusion (2) comes up directly as a result of the CP-motivated assumption that in the end, the contribution of the speaker is indeed related to the topic of the conversation despite appearances.

A typical example involving the flouting of a maxim is that of figures of speech. Metaphors and ironic utterances, for example, are literally false and can consequently be described as flouts of the maxim of Quality. Yet, just as in the example above, cooperation obtains through the inference of implicit meanings and there is no deception going on. However, when a maxim is not overtly, but covertly, violated, deception and uncooperativeness arise. While originally designed to capture issues of meaning, the cooperative principle and the conversational maxims have in fact often been extended to capture behavioural cooperation in communi-

¹ In this case B overtly fails to observe the maxim of Relevance by providing an epistemically motivated piece of information from which (2) can be inferred. In Grice's terms, B is liable to have flouted the maxim of Relation (that is, B has ostensibly failed to observe this maxim) in order to make explicit his reasons for believing (2), thereby ensuring that the maxim of Quality is observed.

cation as well, so much so that Grice-inspired cooperative principles have been brought forth to tackle communicative behaviours such as humour (see Raskin 1985: 102–103) or politeness (see Leech 1983), for instance, but also deceptive communication, even though Grice's main objective was only to explore meaning within its linguistic bounds and to provide a rational theory of communication, construed as a principled means of exchanging information.

Interestingly, when characterising cooperation, Grice mentions in passing a situation straightforwardly interpretable in terms of deception: listing four different ways of failing to fulfil a maxim, he mentions the following as the first possible case: “He [the speaker] may quietly and unostentatiously violate a maxim; if so, in some cases he will be liable to mislead” (Grice 1989: 30). A first characterisation of deception is thus available in terms of non-cooperation: deceptive speakers are those who deliberately fail to observe the conversational maxims *without making it manifest to their audience and with a view to mislead them*. In other words, deceptive speakers *covertly* fail to (i) provide the amount of information required, (ii) be truthful, (iii) be relevant and/or (iv) be perspicuous. This also means that deceptive messages can be expected to be deficient or lacking maxim-wise.² It is precisely to the empirical testing of this assumption that some researchers in Communication Science have devoted their efforts as we shall see next.

2.2 Communication Science: Information Manipulation Theory

The predominantly North-American research tradition of Communication Science (CS) has studied deceptive communication for more than four decades. Studies in the field have explored many different facets of the phenomenon over the years and as a consequence our current understanding of deception is complex and detailed. Obviously one of the first issues deception research has been concerned with is linked to the *identification* of a clear and stable definition, and most studies in the field accordingly explicitly formulate their own understanding of the phenomenon, which supposes some measure of philosophical inquiry.³ Because human interaction can either be cooperative or uncooperative, the second issue scholars have been concerned with has been deception *prevalence*, i.e. the extent to which deception is frequent in human interaction. On this issue, studies usually converge towards the conclusion that deception is less frequent than non-decep-

² Note that it is possible to specify two distinct senses of non-cooperation within Grice's model. On the one hand, overt non-cooperation (see example (1) above) denotes the situation in which the speaker ostensibly fails to observe a maxim. This type of non-cooperation is instrumental to the derivation of meaning. *Non-ostensive* cooperation, on the other hand, i.e. the covert failure to fulfil a maxim, is non-cooperative in a deceptive sense, since the speaker is not making it manifest that maxim nonobservance is at play (but see Oswald 2010: 61–96 for an extensive discussion).

³ See section 2.5, Oswald (2010) and Galasiński (2000) for more extensive discussions.

tion (see e.g., Serota & Levine 2008; DePaul et al. 1996): we are certainly likely to come across deceptive messages on a daily basis, but non-deceptive messages are still the majority, which is inherently predicted by Grice's generalisation. A third area of inquiry targets the *reasons* behind deception; consensus has more or less been reached around the idea that people deceive when truthfulness and honesty involve too many obstacles in order to reach a given goal (see Levine et al. 2008). A fourth (and vast) subfield of deception research deals with deception *detection*; results from empirical testing reveal that people do only slightly better than a coin toss when it comes to identifying deceptive speakers and messages (see Bond & DePaulo 2006). More generally, it seems, according to Levine & Kim (2010), that deception detection research informs us more on the deceptive message and on its source than on people's actual ability to spot deception, which is probably a consequence of the nature of the experimental research designs used (Levine & Kim, *ibid.*).

CS studies of deception usually consist in the submission of questionnaires to panels of respondents – most of the time North American undergraduates; the data collected through these surveys is compiled and analysed so as to draw generalisations. In the study of deception detection, for instance, experiments would typically consist in the submission of a range of deceptive and non-deceptive utterances to respondents, who then have to judge whether the statements are truthful or not. In the study of deception motives, respondents are typically asked to react to a range of given scenarios manipulated to trigger either deceptive or non-deceptive reactions; subjects' (deceptive or non-deceptive) responses then show whether in scenarios affording motives for deception they are likely to produce deceptive statements or not and allows the researchers to assess the relationship between the production of deceptive messages and reasons for doing so.

One particular approach to deception within CS, *Information Manipulation Theory* (McCornack and McCornack et al. 1992, henceforth IMT), is specifically designed to assess linguistic and pragmatic features of deception (i.e. its *verbal* features). The preliminary observations made in the previous section point to the possibility of an account of verbal deception couched in Gricean pragmatics: first of all, Grice's model is designed to deal with intentional communication, which is the case of deception (see section 3). Second, when dealing with failures to observe the maxims, Grice admitted himself that some failures might be unostentatious, and that as a consequence the speaker, in those cases, might be misleading (i.e. deceptive). McCornack and colleagues precisely tried to verify that maxim violation was at the core of deceptive messages. As such, IMT is a theory which addresses the features of deceptive messages as covert deviations from conversational standards and exploits what would be the 'uncooperative' counterpart of the Gricean model of communication as cooperation.⁴

⁴ As Jacobs et al. (1996) observe, IMT is one of the first research efforts which tries to make connections between linguistic pragmatic principles and the nature of deceptive message design.

By considering that messages may be manipulated along four informational dimensions to fulfil deceptive goals, McCornack (1992) attempts to interface Gricean pragmatics with previous research on deception. Several deception researchers had already identified and focused independently on these dimensions: Ekman (1985), Metts (1989) and Turner et al. (1975) attended to the amount of information given as well as its adequacy to truth (which, in Gricean terms, corresponds to the focus of the maxims of Quantity and Quality respectively), Bavelas et al. (1990) to the way messages are formulated (i.e. maxim of Manner), and Turner et al. (1975) to matters of relevance (i.e. maxim of Relation). McCornack observes that this previous research fits nicely with the Gricean maxims. Underlying his work is the assumption that deceptive messages are “unique from other forms of discourse in that they involve deviations from what can be considered rational and cooperative conversational behaviour” (1992: 2). Unlike previous research which yielded problematic taxonomies of deception types, IMT provides a consistent framework allowing to group deceptive messages under one (or more) violation(s) of the finite set of four conversational maxims identified by Grice.

In order to consolidate its main claims, IMT relied on empirical testing. The study carried out by McCornack and his colleagues first gathered a number of deceit-eliciting scenarios, which were then edited in order to avoid ambiguity and to get rid of potential biases. A limited number of scenarios was then submitted to undergraduate students, who were instructed to supply messages in response to one of the potentially lie-eliciting situations. Their task was to write down what they would have said in such situations. The results were analysed as actual deceptive data, and showed that the responses indeed contained violations of the conversational maxims, which was taken to confirm the initial hypothesis: deception seems to operate on the manipulation of information along the dimensions of Quantity, Quality, Manner and Relation.

IMT faces three types of criticisms, both from a methodological and a theoretical perspective. First, the methodology behind IMT can be questioned on the grounds of the lack of naturally occurring deception. The scenarios respondents had to react to in the studies were artificially constructed, and therefore we have no guarantee that the data collected corresponds to spontaneous deceptive communicative behaviours outside the lab (see Galasiński 2000): IMT has analysed “*elicited* ‘deceptive’ messages – that is, messages that participants *consider* to be deceptive, and this does not mean that they would actually use them in discourse in a natural setting” (Galasiński 2000: 33, author’s italics). A second problem related to IMT’s construal of deception is that it fails to capture all instances of deceptive communication: we can in principle think of examples where addressees are misled by relevant, truthful, manner- and quantity-appropriate statements. These occur for instance when political and media advisers release statements in a context where they are not likely to be picked up. The ‘Jo Moore scandal’ is such an example: on September 11, 2001, a few hours after the terrorist attacks on the Unit-

ed States, Jo Moore, a special adviser to the British Secretary of State, circulated a memo suggesting that the time was right to “bury bad news”,⁵ hoping to release potentially damaging information in a context where probably no one would have paid attention to it. Interestingly, such a public announcement would not need to violate any conversational maxim; its deceptive nature resides in the fact that it is released in a context in which its recipients are likely to fail to find it relevant in its own right, since their resources are likely to be mobilised to process information directly in relation to an overwhelming event such as 9/11 (see Maillat & Oswald (2011: 77–78) for a discussion). Therefore, while (probably) most cases of deceptive communication involve covert violations of the conversational maxims, some of them do not, and this means that they cannot be captured by IMT. A third limit of IMT is its inability to distinguish intentional from unintentional maxim violation. Since it does not provide criteria meant to distinguish overt from covert maxim violation, it remains unclear how IMT can disentangle cases of intentional maxim violation from mere errors which naturally occur in conversation, for instance errors resulting from misrepresentations of the common ground shared by the interlocutors. Contravention to one or more conversational maxims is only an indicator of a potential manipulation.

Even though IMT falls short of providing a full-fledged plausible account of deception, the significance of its results open the possibility of accounts based not on Gricean maxims alone but, rather, on more recent approaches elaborated in the continuity of Grice’s work. Such an attempt is that of Cognitive pragmatics (section 2.5).

2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

As mentioned earlier, CDA emerged as a research programme meant to expose how speakers’ linguistic choices may encode, reproduce and propagate ideologies and thereby enforce social inequality and discrimination. From its inception, CDA has drawn on linguistic theory – and on Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar in particular (see Halliday 1973, 1985; Halliday & Hasan 1985) – to explore the assumption that, to the extent that the richness of the linguistic system allows us to select from different formulations to express the same conceptual content, linguistic choices are ideologically relevant. A classic example of the representational possibilities offered by the passive voice constitutes a (now classical) illustration of this claim (see Trew 1979): the semantic agent of a clause, realised in subject position in active sentences, can be omitted in the passive voice without this affecting

⁵ See e.g., <http://www.bbcamerica.com/anglophenia/2011/12/infamous-british-political-scandals-spionage/> for the story.

the grammaticality and interpretability of the sentence.⁶ The point is that in political contexts with high stakes, speakers might take advantage of these syntactico-semantic possibilities to obfuscate information. As discussed by Trew, a newspaper that writes ‘Eleven African were shot dead and fifteen wounded’ (instead of ‘The police shot eleven Africans dead and wounded fifteen others’) might be liable for obfuscating the information that it is the police who directly caused the death of these eleven people by firing their guns (see Trew 1979: 34). By opting for the passive voice, which does not require explicit mention of the semantic agent of the predicate, the newspaper might be charged with reducing the perceived responsibility of the police in the violent events. In turn, this can be interpreted as a ‘pro-police’ ideological choice.

Since CDA is not – and does not claim to be – a unified theory, it is by nature open to interdisciplinary inquiry (even if, as highlighted by Chilton 2005, it has traditionally been only selectively interdisciplinary). This is why CDA draws from many approaches in the Humanities without having the pretension of integrating them all into a consistent and systematic theoretical framework. Relaxing epistemological constraints thus encourages the integration of numerous trends in linguistic and communication research. Multidisciplinarity in CDA is found in the diversity of methodologies and theoretical approaches employed. Over the years, recourse to fields of research as varied as Conversational Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis of several traditions, Ethnography of Communication, Systemic-Functional Grammar, Text Linguistics, Rhetoric, Argumentation Theory, Pragmatics, Cognitive Linguistics, Frame Semantics, Cognitive (or Mental) Models Theory, Script Theory, Semiotics, Social Semiotics, among others, has contributed to develop and enrich research in CDA. Indeed, as CDA is not driven by a unified theoretical goal (such as providing a theoretical model of human communication), but rather by the prime concern about “the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it” (van Dijk 1993: 252), it follows that the theoretical apparatus it employs is “chosen or elaborated as a function of [its] relevance for the realization of such a socio-political goal” (ibid.). Consequently, CDA has borrowed an array of analytical and conceptual instruments from all these disciplines, which it has used to deconstruct the way ideology functions – most of the times covertly – in discourse. The result of such an integrative endeavour is the elaboration of a multifarious and heterogeneous toolkit for linguistic analysis guided by a utility criterion.⁷

⁶ For instance, the transformation of ‘The cat caught the mouse’ in the passive voice may yield either ‘The mouse was caught’ or ‘The mouse was caught by the cat’. Both sentences are grammatical, and even if their focus is different, they can both be said to correspond to the sentence in the active voice.

⁷ Such an interdisciplinary toolkit, where various approaches with diverse and possibly conflicting epistemological assumptions and backgrounds co-exist, raises issues which are not yet settled. For a discussion of interdisciplinarity within CDA see Chilton (2005b) and Oswald (2010: 154–179).

CDA often hovers over the issue of verbal deception without explicitly discussing it. Yet, most of CDA research is devoted to the study of covert influence in language, which is said to contribute to power abuse and social inequality. Van Dijk (2006) nevertheless devotes an entire article to manipulation, in which he defends a triangulated (social, discursive and cognitive) approach designed to tackle the phenomenon in a comprehensive way. Attention is thus paid to (i) its social features: manipulation implies power and illegitimate power abuse between social actors and “it only makes sense to speak of manipulation, [...] when speakers or writers are manipulating others in their role as a member of a dominant collectivity” (van Dijk 2006: 364); (ii) its cognitive features: “manipulation always involves a form of mental manipulation” (ibid.: 360); (iii) its communicative features: manipulation [...] takes place by text and talk” (ibid.: 360). In its social dimension, manipulation is said to exploit group membership, hierarchical roles assigned by institutional and professional positions, material or symbolic resources defining the power of groups and their members. Typically, professors, or politicians, by virtue of their institutional positions and their privileged access to information and public discourse, are more powerful than pupils or voters respectively, and thus might exploit that power to manipulate the latter. While van Dijk does acknowledge that the powerless may also manipulate the powerful, his focus is politically and socially constrained, which is why he is interested in the wider picture: according to him, it makes sense to speak of manipulation as “it is illegitimate in a democratic society, because it (re)produces, or may reproduce, inequality” (van Dijk 2006: 363–364). From a cognitive perspective, he recognises, as we will see further in section 2.5, that deception is not special: “it makes use of very general properties of discourse processing” and consists in “illegitimate hindering or biasing of the process of discourse comprehension” (ibid.: 366). While cognitive considerations do inform us on how manipulation works, they do not tell us why manipulation is perceived as deceitful; this in turn legitimates, in the view of CDA, the need for a social dimension in the study of deception. Finally, the discursive dimension of van Dijk’s take on manipulation is related to the sort of linguistically informed analysis carried out in traditional and mainstream CDA: it consists in listing and describing different structures and types of linguistic constructions which can be strategically used to ideologically influence representations.

One of CDA’s main contributions to the study of verbal deception lies in its identification of the discursive strategies language users resort to in order to convey ideological representations of the world which are deemed to be desirable and well suited.⁸ Among those, we find referential, predicative and legitimising strategies. Referential strategies are used to represent the world, social actors in particular, in a way that is compatible with the speaker’s ideology and interests. Predicative strategies are meant to endow representations of social actors with evaluative

⁸ See Hart 2010, chapters 3, 4 and 5 for an extensive overview.

social values (typically, these strategies are used to positively represent in-groupness and to negatively represent out-groupness). Legitimising strategies comprise the list of different means by which the speaker – or their discourse – displays epistemic reliability, credibility or social legitimacy.

Even if mainstream CDA does not make any strong claim as to the deterministic potential of these strategies, it seems reasonable to assume that many instances of verbal deception can make use of these strategies in a covert way; that is, deceivers can reasonably be expected to rely on these strategies without drawing attention to the fact that they do. Overall, the fundamental contribution of CDA to the study of verbal deception is thus of an illustrative nature and is to be found in the vast amount of systematic corpus studies drawing our attention to the way these strategies are realised in discourse.

2.4 Argumentation Theory

Building on Aristotle's foundational distinctions between logic, dialectic and rhetoric, scholars in Argumentation Theory (see this volume, chapter 13) have explored over the years the multiple facets of argumentation, including its relationship with persuasion and deception. Although deception can be approached quite straightforwardly through the rhetorical notion of speaker *ethos*, to the extent that in order to convince someone it is often enough to get them to deem you trustworthy, competent and benevolent, mainstream research in argumentation has also focused on the connection between deception and fallacious argumentation. The adoption of this perspective, we surmise, follows from the tacit but seemingly widespread consideration, among argumentation scholars, that deception is “above all a question of means, and not of ends” (Nettel & Roque 2012: 58). As a result, research on the deceptive character of some argumentative moves is foremost concerned with the way arguments can become deceptive, i.e. taken as a means to attain further goals such as the adoption of beliefs or specific behaviour.

The standard treatment of fallacies defines a fallacy as an argument “that seems to be valid but is not so” (Hamblin 1970: 12), and, perhaps more objectively, as an argument in which the conclusion does not follow from the premises. However, this is not yet equivalent to considering that a fallacy is necessarily deceptive. Fallacies can indeed be used to deceive, but they are sometimes unintentionally committed, and, as such, cannot be deemed to be *necessarily* deceptive. To take but a very simple example, consider George W. Bush's famous argument to legitimise the so-called war on Terror following the 9/11 attacks:

- (3) “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”⁹

⁹ Transcript of President Bush's address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, Sept. 20, 2001. Available online at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>. (last checked, 17.02. 2014)

While (3) clearly lays the grounds of the fallacy known as the false dilemma, and while we do not question that this is most probably the type of reasoning underlying Bush's utterance, we cannot ascertain that he is trying to deceive us from the mere presence of a fallacious argument: for one, he could be making a simple reasoning mistake, and an error of this kind is by no means direct evidence of any sort of deceptive intention. It could also be the case that he actually sincerely, though mistakenly, believes that the world is Manichean and that there are only two possible stances on the issue at hand. If such is the case, then the example should not be treated as deceptive either, because under these circumstances George W. Bush is not even aware that he is making a reasoning mistake and that the way he supports his standpoint is built on fallacious grounds.

The non-necessarily deceptive character of fallacious argumentation has been recognised by argumentation scholars, even if an explicit stance on the issue is seldom voiced. Tindale is among those who acknowledge that fallacies may not be systematically deceptive, when he warns that "we should not take deception to be part of the definition of fallacy" (2007: 15). Walton similarly considers that "a fallacious argument can be deceptive by appearing to be a better argument of its kind than it really is" (2010: 159, notice the modal 'can'), adding in the same paper that fallacies "are arguments that work as deceptive stratagems" (2010: 179). We contend that the treacherous nature of fallacies – referring here to their misleading effect on their addressees – should not be equated with the speaker's intent to deceive.

Despite the problems involved in systematically assessing the relationship between deception and fallacious arguments, the study of argumentation provides relevant insights for an inquiry into deceptive strategies, to the extent that deception often has to rely on justification in order to go through. Since successful – i.e. persuasive or convincing – fallacies need to remain unspotted in order to fulfil their role, a better knowledge of how they work can inform us on the workings of the deceptive mechanisms at play in faulty justification. The typology of fallacies that has been elaborated since Aristotle¹⁰ provides us with valuable tools to analyse the verbal manifestation of inferential processes that appear to be faulty in some respect. This means that thanks to argumentation theory we can analyse in depth cases of deception in which fallacious argumentation is used, so as to identify with precision where the 'trick' lies in the faulty inference: some fallacies indeed play on the fact that the evidence provided is (covertly) irrelevant to the issue at stake (this is typical of the fallacies termed *red herrings* where the speaker tries to divert the addressee's attention from one argument or standpoint onto another unrelated one), some others rely on defective causal relationships (such as the *post*

¹⁰ See Hansen & Pinto 1995, Part I, for a historical overview, and, e.g., Copi & Cohen 1994 or the website <http://www.fallacyfiles.org> for a standard list of different fallacies that have been studied over the years.

hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy in which a subsequent event is presented as having been caused by a prior event by virtue of their temporal succession, or the *cum hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy, which relies on the temporal and/or spatial co-occurrence of two events to attempt to justify a causal relation between them); others play on the credibility of the source of information (*ad hominem*, *ad populum* and *ad verecundiam*, for instance, see Maillat 2013 and Oswald & Hart 2013), and so on.

The study of fallacies is thus relevant to the study of deception because it targets a process many times involved in deception. This also means that the study of fallacies can be assessed in cognitive terms, given its focus on inference. Moreover, it calls for an in-depth consideration of two important dimensions that are relevant to fallacy-dependent deception, namely its production and its reception. The two questions that can be assessed within a cognitively-grounded framework of fallacious deception are the following: why do people commit fallacies? Why do people fall prey to fallacies? The latter in fact amounts to studying why fallacies can at all be effective arguments.

Within argumentation studies, the first question has started to be tackled in connection to the issue of cognitive biases (see Walton 2010; Jackson 1996; Correia 2011, forth.): people are deemed to commit fallacies as they follow cost-effective cognitive shortcuts and biases that allow for quick, fast and frugal inferences to take place. To give but one example borrowed from Correia (2011), the cognitive illusion known as the *focusing illusion* (Schkade & Kahneman 1998), which accounts for the propensity people have to make category judgements based only on a small (non-representative) subset of elements, can plausibly be considered to be the cognitive mechanism at play behind the fallacy known as the *hasty generalisation*, in which a speaker draws a general conclusion from evidence that does not warrant it.

Probably one of the biggest advantages of resorting to a cognitive framework in order to account for deceptive fallacious communication lies in its ability to equally account for inferential work at the reception end. Thus, a cognitive account would capture the addressee's failure to spot a fallacy presumably through its propensity to draw attention to information sets that are not detrimental to its success, i.e. to draw the addressee's attention away from critical information. Here, again, the management of information accessibility can be accounted for in terms of the cognitive psychological features of our fallible and bias-driven way of processing information.

2.5 The Cognitive Pragmatic approach

A way to envisage bridging the gaps between these main trends while taking advantage of their richness is to adopt a cognitive pragmatic perspective, as Maillat & Oswald (2009, 2011), Maillat (2013), Oswald (2010, 2011, 2014), Saussure (2005, 2013, 2014), Lewiński & Oswald (2013), Oswald & Lewiński (2014), Oswald & Hart

(2013) do. Sperber & Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory is not originally designed to address deception in communication but to explain meaning, i.e. verbal understanding, by resorting to a cognitive principle of efficiency. The theory builds on Gricean pragmatics although it leaves aside the normative aspects of the theory (the maxims) and focuses instead on the notion of intention recognition. Relevance theory is inscribed within a broad approach to cognition, knowledge, communication and human behaviour which gives rise to a general anthropology of human cultures based on cognitive assumptions (Sperber 1985, 1990, 1997, 2001, 2007, 2011; see also this volume, chapter 6). Researchers in these trends have recently come to address the issue of arguing, deceiving and spotting deception. The most notable contribution in this respect is the development of the notion of epistemic vigilance (see work by Sperber et al. 2010) and its specification in terms of argumentation through the *argumentative theory of reasoning* (Mercier & Sperber 2009, 2011; Mercier 2012), which provides a general cognitive framework in which these phenomena may be construed. In another cognitive framework, Dessalles suggests that individuals resort to argumentation in order to "advertise one's ability to detect lies and errors" (Dessalles 2011: 76; see also this volume, chapter 11) with the aim, ultimately, to control and defend their leadership abilities.

The references within cognitive pragmatics already mentioned at the beginning of the previous paragraph take a decisively linguistic approach to communication that is directly relevant to the discussion at hand. They put forward the idea that the success of deceptive attempts in communication is directly related to the degree of cognitive accessibility of certain contextual assumptions and consider Relevance theory to be an ideally-suited theoretical framework to account for this assumption. In this framework, deception is considered to be an intentional phenomenon mostly due to its covert nature: deceivers cannot conceivably hide something they are not aware of. Furthermore, deception is seen as operating at the level of verbal information processing, by constraining the addressee's access to critical information. This means that during the comprehension process there are constraints at play that secure the inaccessibility or dismissal of pieces of information that could compromise the success of the deceptive attempt in the cognitive system of the addressee. A cognitive account of deception will then rely on a precise characterisation of how verbal information is processed during the comprehension procedure in order to identify the different types of cognitive constraints that partake in the success of verbal deception.

In a series of publications on the topic, Maillat, Oswald and Saussure have started to explore the possibilities of pragmatic research to consider the links between understanding and believing, through an examination of the cognitive operations at play when language users process verbal information in argumentative and deceptive communicative contexts. A model of verbal deception was thus elaborated by focusing on the role of the construction of context which lies at the heart of relevance-theoretic pragmatics (the *Context Selection Constraint* model, see Mail-

lat & Oswald 2009, 2011). The main idea behind this model is that the successful deceiver tries to make sure that the contextual information against which a target deceptive utterance is processed is devoid of any critical, contradicting information; in other words, successful deception plans and exploits the addressee's failure to assess as *relevant* any information set that could defeat the deceptive utterance.

In order to account for such a constraint, it is necessary to assess (i) how verbal information is understood, and, more specifically, (ii) how information can be backgrounded and/or foregrounded in order to be perceived as irrelevant or relevant respectively. Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986, 1995; Wilson & Sperber 2012; Carston 2002; henceforth RT), as a cognitively grounded theory of communication, proposes a theoretical framework equipped with criteria that determine information selection. According to the theory, which construes communication as an evolutionarily advantageous means to secure a more accurate representation of the world, verbal information is processed in communication following a principle of cognitive efficiency named *cognitive principle of relevance*. In the process of recovering the meaning intended by the speaker – which often involves recovering many more contents than those that are explicitly uttered by the speaker, as we discussed in section 2.1 – the addressee will select in priority the most accessible assumptions, in terms of processing effort, and at the same time those that yield more cognitive effects, the latter being usually defined in terms of epistemic advantages: a given assumption will be deemed relevant if it allows the cognitive system to benefit from new reliable information, to get rid of inaccurate old information or to strengthen information that was not previously fully confirmed. In a nutshell, RT postulates that relevant information is information that is easy to process and at the same time information that is useful to the cognitive system in terms of its reliability and informativeness. In this perspective, understanding what a speaker means is therefore the result of working out the best effort/effect ratio by following a path of least effort when selecting the information set against which an utterance is being interpreted. These two parameters, called *extent conditions of relevance* (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 125) constitute under this view the pivotal mechanisms that deception exploits.

If deceptive communication can be construed as a phenomenon that operates constraints on the selection of information during the comprehension process, it can *ipso facto* be described as a twofold mechanism: on the one hand it tries to make sure that every information set that is mobilised in the process is compatible and coherent with the target deceptive utterance, while on the other it strives to keep critical information sets that would defeat the deceptive attempt concealed (i.e. so as to leave them unprocessed or to get the cognitive system of the addressee to dismiss them). Under this view, deception works simultaneously as a weakening and a strengthening constraint. This opens up the possibility of studying specific wordings and linguistic constructions that precisely trigger such constraints. Ex-

amples of such analyses are gradually becoming available as research within this framework is carried out; phenomena such as metaphors (Oswald & Rihs 2013), flashbulb contexts (Maillat & Oswald 2009), the straw man fallacy (Oswald & Lewiński 2014, Lewiński & Oswald 2013), source-related fallacies (Oswald & Hart 2013), the *ad populum* fallacy (Maillat 2013), presuppositions (Saussure 2013) have been interpreted from this perspective, and the range of linguistic phenomena at the heart of deceptive uses of language can be expected to be extended further, as all of them can be thought of as enforcing strengthening and weakening strategies meant to constrain the salience of certain contextual assumptions.

An additional component of this research programme lies in its compatibility with more general cognitive research on biases and heuristics. To begin with, the comprehension procedure described above can itself be construed as a heuristic (Wilson & Sperber 2004: 259): understanding is a fallible process, if only because most of the time the addressee is responsible for mobilising (i.e. selecting) the intended contextual assumptions in order to make sense of the linguistic material that has been uttered by the speaker – and he can always fail in this selection. In this sense, deceptive communication can be characterised as an asymmetric process in which the speaker constrains the addressee's selection of contextual assumptions as the latter engages in the comprehension process, thereby deliberately trying to hinder his selection of critical information. This is possible by virtue of the heuristic nature of comprehension, which is an important property of the relevance-theoretic cognitive account of human communication, as it integrates the very fallibility of the system. A heuristic-driven cognitive process is prone to making errors since fast and frugal heuristics, although they provide resource-optimal means of deriving new knowledge, are not, by definition, exhaustive or systematic. As a result, our cognitive system can – and in fact, will – err at times. While this comment is true of the comprehension process we detailed above, it also applies to other cognitive heuristics that influence the cognitive operations needed whenever we modify our cognitive environment, i.e. our representation of the world.

This should not be regarded as a defect in the system though, as Tversky & Kahneman (1974), or more recently Gigerenzer (2008) have shown: heuristics are the results of an evolutionary drive in optimising cognitive efficiency as they offer the best balance between speedy derivation of new knowledge and costly inferential thorough evaluation processes. As such they offer fast and reasonably robust means of acquiring new knowledge at a fraction of the cognitive cost.

From a cognitive perspective, proponents of the cognitive pragmatic approach argue that deception can often be seen as exploiting these heuristics, as they correspond to specific instances when the cognitive system takes shortcuts. The first of these heuristics to be taken advantage of by deceptive strategies is the very comprehension procedure: as seen above, interpretation is a non-exhaustive, context-dependent representation of the intended meaning, which can miss out critical information sets. On a second level, the literature in cognitive psychology has iden-

tified many other such heuristics and biases which allow us to predict the type of cognitive processes that deceptive uses of language are likely to target. Thus, a wealth of research has been carried out on cognitive biases and heuristics since the 1960s (see e.g., Tversky & Kahneman 1974; Gigerenzer 2008), detailing how our cognitive system tends to privilege fast and economical processes over reflective ones, thereby giving prevalence to cognitive *illusions*. These illusions correspond to three types of cognitive errors: errors in judgement, reasoning and memory (see Pohl 2004 for an overview). For instance, the *anchoring effect* affects the selection of contextual assumption held in long-term memory, as a subject's recall is biased towards a known target value (Tversky & Kahneman 1974; Mussweiler et al. 2004). The *labeling effect* describes the bias induced on long-term memories by the word-ing chosen to describe those memories. The *validity effect* describes the tendency for repeated statements to be judged as more and more valid across iterations (Häscher et al. 1977; Hackett Renner 2004).

As in the case of the *validity effect*, many such cognitive biases are certainly part of the mechanisms targeted by verbal deception, and as a result, counterparts to cognitive biases can be found in the body of argumentative fallacies that have been identified through history (see e.g., Correia 2011, forth.). In the case of the *validity effect*, Maillat (2013) shows how it underlies the heavy usage of repetition in propaganda. Maillat (2013), Maillat & Oswald (2011) establish a link between the mere-exposure effect and the *ad populum* fallacy, while Saussure (2013) tentatively links the accommodation of discursive presuppositions with the exploitation of the confirmation bias.

A cognitive framework such as this one is also related to the experimental research being carried out in the tradition of psychology of reasoning (e.g., Wason 1966; Johnson-Laird 2006; Evans & Over 1996, who have shown how humans are prone to reasoning errors), developmental psychology on the role of contextual factors in credal attitudes (Harris et al. 2012) and more broadly in cognitive psychology and pragmatics. Work carried out by anthropologists and philosophers around the notion of *epistemic vigilance* (Sperber et al. 2010), addressing the cognitive bases of trust and consistency checking, is typically relevant to the research on deception and uncooperative verbal communication, although not specific to verbal communication. Interestingly, this very solid grounding of the cognitive pragmatic approach to deception in a number of experimental traditions ensures the testability of its theoretical claims, while also providing an independently motivated cross-examination of some of its central arguments.

3 Applications

Research on the mechanisms at work in intentional deception and manipulation in verbal communication is probably the core research of (critical) discourse analy-

sis as a discipline. However, one important distinction between ordinary (cooperative) and deceptive communication needs to be taken into account. In both cases, of course, we deal with intentional communication. In both cases the speaker intends to make information available to the addressee. In both cases, the latter processes the discourse so that he entertains assumptions about the meaning intentions of the speaker, and these assumptions are, in the end, the meaning actually conveyed by the speech acts. Yet, that the speaker is cooperative in verbal communication is taken as a precondition, or a presumption, before anything like information processing can take place. That people observe the cooperative principle, to shape this in Gricean terms, that they conform to the presumption of relevance (the presumption communicated by any utterance that it is relevant and thus worth processing), as Sperber & Wilson (1995) put it, is an automatic starting point for understanding the message, and even in deceptive communication the speaker claims to observe these principles without which communication would simply not occur. But a manipulative or deceptive attempt supposes a second-order intention about informational, behavioural, perlocutionary effects that the message conveyed is supposed to trigger in the addressee. In short: 'normal' benevolent communication can be studied without wondering what the speaker has in mind: we can study the meanings and actual effects of utterances on the addressees (which we analysts are too if only by intuition) without having to think about the actual intentions of speakers; after all, meaning intentions are intended to be detected by the addressee. With manipulation or deception, as discussed before, it is the opposite: assessing with certainty that there is manipulation going on and not an error of some sort, i.e. assessing that there is an intention to mislead, is out of reach for discourse analysis of course. Hence scholars tend to address deception only indirectly as a type of problematic, or fallacious, influence.

Addressing the mechanisms of deception in verbal communication is therefore not really different from addressing the mechanisms of fallacious persuasion. Fallacious persuasion occurs in propagandas of various kinds but of course typically in discourses related to politics and economy, in fanatic and dogmatic discourses of various kinds including sectarian discourses, but also in more subtle settings with all sorts of degrees of persuasiveness where questionable interventions are interwoven with more acceptable ones. Such discourses are very frequent and there are many studies about them in various frameworks. The more traditional way of addressing the issue of persuasiveness and manipulation is to observe how the considered speech/discourse develops and represents social roles associated both with groups and with ideologies within relations of dominance, power and exclusion (with notions such as in-/out-groups for example). Today, this approach, mostly descriptive, is complemented with the type of cognitive approaches described in the preceding section. Besides basic linguistic facts such as passivisation and nominalisation, a number of semantic and pragmatic-contextual features are identified in the literature as playing a major role in persuading or, as Herman and Chomsky (1988) put it, in 'manufacturing consent'.

The role of the lexicon is identified in the literature on deception as crucial in that, when appropriately contextualized, it can lead to problematic inferences because of the many connotations that a lexical choice can involve. Euphemisms, when used in institutional settings, can be a trace of a persuasive attempt through minimizing or even blocking the effects of some action or the undesirability of some situation; consider for example the expressions *collateral damage* or *friendly fire*. This is of course not to say that euphemisms are by nature persuasive or deceptive, otherwise in the end any figure of speech would be so too. But in given contexts, there is little doubt that they are: a *damage* is not treated as a tragedy, even though on the ground a true tragedy has of course happened. Allott (2005) studies cases such as the use of the word *democracy* in Bush's speeches related to the invasion in Iraq, and suggests that the word only gets processed shallowly in order to maintain the validity of the expectation that the speaker is being relevant (or cooperative); *democracy* is a connotatively loaded word and thus gives rise to positive feelings and favours consent even if the word gets deprived of a true content, notably because its semantic emptiness gets unnoticed. The wide research tradition initiated by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and further elaborated by Fauconnier & Turner (2003) or linguists like Langacker, usually termed 'Cognitive linguistics', takes a close look at the lexicon and spots recurrent metaphorical associations that words trigger, which, they suggest, anchor on schematic associations that are fundamental to our cognition of the outer world. Usually these relations are not problematic in any serious way; an example of such associations is *love is a journey* which appears as underlying utterances such as *Our relationship is at a crossroads* or *That love affair was a rough ride*. In other cases however, as extensively discussed (see e.g., Hart 2010), such associations have some persuasive effects in triggering access to parasitic representations (as Chilton 2005 shows with the classical example of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*). More generally, many facts of semantic nature play a crucial role in how the representation is going to be dealt with in terms of acceptability, but the context in which the utterances is processed is crucial and, as Maillat & Oswald (2009, 2011) suggest, the context itself can be manufactured in a way in which some assumptions, even very accessible ones in the abstract, are put aside during the very process of comprehension. Typical jokes and riddles make use of such effects, as when asking the interlocutor if he finds it frightening that New Year's Eve next year will be on Friday 13th (Oswald 2010; Saussure 2013). Starting from the idea that interlocutors are confident that the speaker is cooperative or relevant, the addressee will tend to find an interpretation which maintains this presumption and sometimes he will fail to take obvious pieces of information into account in order to satisfy this expectation of relevance or cooperation (for example that 31st December cannot possibly be on 13th). Saussure (2013) makes a similar case about the Swiss vote on banning minarets, arguing that simply raising the question calls for recruiting odd assumptions about the potential danger of minarets; he argues that such effects arise on the basis of undue accommodations

of presuppositions. A number of other semantic and pragmatic facts directly influence the inferences drawn by the audience but also the epistemic acceptability of the propositions, such as information about the origin of the belief that they carry (hearsay, inference, perception ...), a notion called *evidentiality* which is becoming more and more fashionable in the domain of persuasiveness in discourse (see the recent issue of *Discourse Studies* specifically dedicated to this, 2011).

Needless to say, trying to spot non cooperative, persuasive, manipulative attempts is also central to media studies. Besides more traditional ways of analysing discourse, i.e. in terms of relations of power and in-/out-groups, a well-established paradigm of research in cognitive psychology is beginning to attract more and more attention from other scholars including those working on media. *Media studies* is now a field which crucially includes studies on the regularity of typical effects triggered in the media on the perception of the world and how the way information is shaped has a direct and predictable influence. Thus, scholars working within Communication Science have looked at the media-related counterparts of the cognitive biases mentioned in the previous section. Sundar (2007), Flanagin & Metzger (2007), or more recently Metzger & Flanagin (2013), look at the parameters affecting credibility and authoritativeness in online media. Sundar investigates the impact that interactivity has on information assessment and constructs an elaborate model that integrates dozens of so-called *media effects* which constrain the way information is interpreted (Sundar 2008). While this type of research does not focus primarily on deceptive uses it is very well equipped to explain the type of strategies that manipulators could resort to in order to achieve credibility, authoritativeness, etc. Interestingly, Communication Science is also responsible for starting a new chapter in this line of research as scholars have started investigating cultural variation in the kind of cognitively-induced effects discussed in this chapter. Hornikx et al. (2013), for instance, show how what would constitute an *ad verecundiam* fallacy (argument of authority) in Holland, would fail to trigger the same effect in Germany.

While these recent, detailed discourse-analytical applications of fundamental research on deception are nowadays at the centre of much scholarly work across disciplines, nevertheless it must be highlighted that these efforts are not new and that the relationships between language, beliefs, as well as social parameters were already the main issues underlying Viktor Klemperer's own philological work, which set out to examine how the Nazi regime modified the German language in order to fulfil its ideological needs (see Klemperer 2006 [1947]). Purely linguistic processes such as neologisms, prefixes or lexical narrowing, and their interaction with macro strategies of repetition, censorship and media control, were among the mechanisms Klemperer extensively discussed to understand how the regime managed to spread its influence in communicative strategies, with a strong focus on the changes systematically implemented on the German lexicon (see for instance Klemperer's insightful analysis of the concepts 'fanatic' and 'hero'). It is

directly in the continuity of these observations that contemporary discourse analysis, informed by cognitive science and communication science, can proceed to expose the pervasiveness of deception and other types of illegitimate communicative influence.

From a macro perspective, the directions of research mentioned above should be complemented with research about propaganda and how information spreads at the scale of a whole population. Work on epistemic vigilance (Sperber et al. 2010) has already started to look at how cultural and institutional constraints could be put in place in order to reduce the risks of misinformation and deception on larger communicative scales, far beyond interpersonal communication. Notably, two directions of research seem to arise naturally once we take this question into account. First, there is the issue of explaining why cultural information is relevant to some communities, and why and how it spreads. Although it has been investigated within cognitive science, this question will also need to take input from communication science, social psychology and media studies, as these are concerned with the way information spreads (see for instance Bangerter & Heath 2004 on the Mozart effect). Second, research on propaganda and the transmission of (problematic) cultural information also needs to specify how misinformation manages to overcome the epistemic filters already in place at an institutional level (peer reviewing in academic circles, editorial control in the media, reputation indexes online, etc.). There is much to be gained, in this perspective, from the interaction between the different disciplines.

4 Conclusion

As it focuses on linguistic features of deception, the review of research on deceptive communication provided here falls short of covering other, non-linguistic, relevant aspects of scientific inquiry on the subject. Many linguistic, pragmatic and cognitive parameters involved in deception have been discussed herein, but para-linguistic aspects of information control remain to be detailed. Notably, from the perspective of communication at a population scale, it goes without saying that information control and information circulation strategies play a central role in the propagation of ideology and of deceptive messages. Censorship, for one, illustrates this kind of para-linguistic control. This is what happened in Nazi Germany since 1933, when the regime managed to achieve total press control (see e.g., Wilke's (2005) insightful analysis). Whereas media control has been claimed to be more difficult to achieve in democracies because coercion is not an acceptable option in such societies (but see Herman & Chomsky 1988), this observation fuelled early research in critical linguistics (see section 2.3) such as Fowler's (1991) *Language in the news*, who argued that news making is biased, despite the alleged independence of the press. This and many other issues touching upon how information is

materially allowed to circulate are of crucial interest to complement linguistic research on deception.

If we now conclude by getting back to the interpersonal features of deceptive communication, we need to highlight that the social dimensions that play a role in the reproduction of ideologies are active only because there exists linguistic means to convey information, contexts in which information is processed, and inferences drawn by individuals – those people, individualised or not, to whom the communication is directed. All these factors have to be known so that the underlying mechanisms not only of verbal communication, but in particular of biased, non-cooperative, manipulative communication can be grasped. If a systematic one-to-one relation can be theoretically motivated, and experimentally tested, between a specific verbal stimulus, a set of verbal (or non-verbal) attempts at providing salience (foregrounding) to certain contextual assumptions or, on the contrary, at lowering it (backgrounding) and attested sub-optimal comprehension processes on the part of the addressee, compared to a control condition in which no such foregrounding-backgrounding constraint occurs, then the language sciences and the study of verbal communication – pragmatics – would definitely have something interesting to contribute to our understanding of deception and uncooperative communication in the real world.

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Geert Jacobs

26 Verbal communication quality in institutional contexts¹

Abstract: This chapter presents a selective outline of methods for evaluating the quality of verbal communication in the context of institutions. It is based on classroom experience with an interactive master's course, where teams of students were invited to produce and evaluate a business plan (to attract funding), a job posting (to recruit new staff) and a press release (to contain a corporate crisis). The chapter draws attention to how important it is to take the communicative context into account through qualitative, ethnographic inquiry. It is suggested that it pays off to go behind the scenes, backstage in Goffman's terminology, to monitor the complex production and reception processes underlying most verbal communication, including the notion of reuse.

Keywords: quality, text-focused evaluation, expert-focused evaluation, reader-focused evaluation

1 Introduction

To address the issue of *quality* in the study of verbal communication is no straightforward matter, at least not from the viewpoint of the language sciences, which have had a long tradition of detailed and systematic description of the system and structure both of language in general and of individual languages. The linguistic interest in language *use* and hence in issues related to verbal communication quality is a relatively recent phenomenon: it was not until what the editors of this volume call the “pragmatic turn” in the language sciences that communicative action was put centre stage (e.g., Levinson 1983). In comparison, note that in a 1989 article that I draw on more extensively later in this chapter Schriver says that “a variety of document-evaluation methods” have been around since the 1930s. She is obviously referring to work outside linguistics; note in this respect the use of ‘document’ rather than, say, text. Also, not all linguistic pragmatic work looks at the quality of communication. On the contrary, in the 353 pages of the book of abstracts of the latest conference of the International Pragmatics Association, the world's premier organization in the field of linguistic pragmatics (New Delhi 2013),

¹ I am very grateful to the two editors of this volume as well as to the two anonymous reviewers for their interesting input and for their encouragement.

‘quality’ is just mentioned seven times. Interestingly, all mentions are related to research on verbal communication in institutional contexts.

In contrast, look at the unambiguous focus on quality in the opening lines of the editorial introduction to the first issue of the journal *Document Design* at its launch back in 1999:

World War II is still an important topic of research, not only for historians, but for document designers as well. Studies have shown that many of the serious and fatal accidents that occurred during the war were the result of misunderstanding instructions. The documents proved too difficult for the soldiers in emergency situations.

Clearly, some scholars in the broad field of verbal communication studies have moved more quickly to embrace quality than others. And so including a chapter on verbal communication quality in the present volume is not at all straightforward.

In addition to the fact that the linguistic interest in quality is relatively new, here are some more elements that complicate our endeavours to deal with verbal communication quality in this chapter:

- by its very nature the study of verbal communication quality draws on *interdisciplinary partnerships* with such neighbouring disciplines as ethnography (mapping the social dimensions of communication) and the psychology of problem-solving (with a view to its cognitive dimensions). Of course it has also led to collaboration with the communication sciences. While such academic encounters across disciplinary boundaries are exciting, they are – as is well-known – not without their challenges, both theoretical and practical.
- as no form of verbal communication is entirely disconnected from the non-verbal (ranging from gestures in oral interaction to typography in writing), examining quality involves multimodality. Some of the pioneering work in this area has been done in the field of website design and usability (see de Jong & Lentz 2006; van den Haak 2009; Donker-Kuijer et al. 2010 and Elling et al. 2011 for recent work on e-government).
- with linguists venturing beyond description to evaluation and, if not prescription, then certainly practical implications comes a flurry of questions around *methodology* (including a suspicion of subjectivity related to issues of validity and reliability – de Jong & Schellens (2000) suggest some of the early evaluations are built on “quicksand”) and even *ethics* (can and should we give recommendations to, say, advertisers on how to be more persuasive?).
- certainly, if we’re not sure about selling out to professionals, at least we can and should help our students to become better communicators? With this *pedagogical perspective* come the notions of skills, needs analysis, literacy and self-efficacy (Bandura 1977), to name but a few.

Taking into account the limitations of a single chapter like this in addressing such a complex topic, I propose to present an outline of methods for evaluating the

quality of verbal communication in the context of institutions. The outline is bound to be selective and the selection will no doubt be arbitrary. In line with the pedagogic concerns that dominate a lot of interest in communication quality, the outline presented here draws on my classroom experience with an interactive master's course I have taught at a small-size Central European university, where students were introduced to different methods for written text evaluation. Crucially, they were also invited to try them out in the context of a team-based assignment in which they set up their own internet-related company. The teams had to produce and evaluate the following text genres: a business plan (to attract funding), a job posting (to recruit new staff) and a press release (to contain a corporate crisis).

In contrast with most of the key publications in this area that will be surveyed in the course of this chapter, we will be less concerned with the typical issues of quantitative analysis, including validity (whether we measure what we want to measure) and reliability (related to sample size). Instead, we will draw attention to how important it is to take the communicative context into account through qualitative, ethnographic inquiry. In doing so, we will suggest it pays off to go behind the scenes, *backstage* in Goffman's terminology, to monitor the complex production and reception processes underlying most verbal communication, including the notion of *reuse*.

In the next sections we will turn to the various methods for evaluating text quality but not before we have clarified the central concepts in this chapter. 'Verbal communication' has been defined elaborately in the introduction to this volume and so we do not deem it necessary to go into any more detail here. Suffice it to say we consider it to include written and oral communication, as well as the use of written and spoken language in various forms of digital communication. The concepts of 'institutions' and 'quality' require some more attention, though.

First, briefly, institutions. De Jong & Schellens (1997) say it is the professionalization in the field of technical communication that "has engendered a growing interest in practical design-supporting research" and hence in issues of quality and evaluation. They refer to all kinds of functional texts, including manuals, leaflets and forms (402). From a somewhat different perspective, Schriver (1989) makes more or less the same point when she says that work-type reading and writing differs dramatically from school-type reading and writing. Although she does not go into the specific reasons why the two are different, it is implied that they have to do with the different ways in which school teachers and, say, business professionals interpret 'quality'. Obviously, the notion of 'institutions' goes well beyond the technical, engineering setting to include news media, health care, law, marketing and politics, to name but a few domains. This broad scope is already characteristic of early work in this area, like Drew & Heritage's (1992) collection of studies of language and social interaction called *Talk at Work*. While the volume is not about quality, it does characterize institutional discourse as "basically task-related" (3), with specific constraints determining what counts as an allowable contri-

bution to the activity at hand and what doesn't (22). A similar orientation can be found in most other work in this area, including contributions of professional discourse by Bazerman & Paradis (1991), Gunnarsson, Linell & Nordberg (1997), and Roberts & Sarangi (1999) as well as on organizational discourse, like Iedema (2007). For more recent work in this area see Candlin & Crichton's (2012) and Pelsmaekers, Rollo & Jacobs' (2014) studies of trust and Östman & Solin's forthcoming analysis of responsibility.

So what is communication quality in institutions? It is generally agreed that low-quality (or bad) communication fails to consider the audience's needs. Zooming in on written texts, Schriver (1989) mentions a number of typical problems: forgetting to provide the necessary context, not including examples, obscuring the purpose of the text, leaving out critical information and writing too abstractly. In contrast, high-quality (or good) communication does consider the audience's needs. Note that this central concern with audience ties in with standard linguistic pragmatic concerns with (mis)understanding (including notions like presupposition, implicature and audience design) and co-operation (Gricean maxims) as well as more specific categories like relevance, empathy and coherence.

It should be mentioned here that, just like with linguistic pragmatics, a lot of research on verbal communication in institutional contexts is not concerned about quality. To give just one example that was used in the corporate crisis module of the master's course: in their case study of a faculty strike at Eastern Michigan University, Vielhaber & Waltman (2006) are only interested in describing how the various stakeholders communicated, not in finding out how successful they were in doing so. To examine crisis communication strategies and messages, the researchers collected press releases, Web site postings, and e-mails sent by the university's leadership and by the faculty union in the period before and during the strike. Based on the model developed by Coombs (1999) these documents were then examined to identify the crisis response strategies and the technology used to communicate those responses. There is not a single reference to quality in this paper.

2 Classifying methods for evaluating the quality of verbal communication

There are various ways in which to organize this presentation of methods for evaluating the quality of verbal communication. I will zoom in on four here: the timing of the evaluation, the specific topics on which the texts are evaluated, the objectives of the evaluation and who is involved in evaluating.

The first perspective on evaluation methods that I would like to present here is to look at the *timing* of the evaluation. In particular, I propose distinguishing, as de Jong & Schellens (1997) do in their work on the quality of written texts, between

so-called prewriting research and what they label 'formative text evaluation'. The former category includes audience analysis, where the writer pro-actively tries to get a good idea of the readership's needs and expectations even before he or she starts writing. The latter is evaluation proper and includes different forms of so-called usability testing: in this case a preliminary version of the text has already been written and the evaluation is set up in order to guide the redesign of the text. Clearly, both types of approaches can be combined. In this article, our focus is on the latter, more purely evaluative type of intervention, though. The idea is to survey different methods for evaluating communication quality on the basis of some kind of draft.

Another way to look at different evaluation methods is to zoom in on the specific *topics* on which the texts are evaluated. Some of the traditional topics include content, organization, visual design, style and illustrations. De Jong & Schellens (1997) spell out the following: selection, comprehension, application, acceptance, appreciation, relevance and completeness, all of which involve the reader. Other, reader-oriented topics that are frequently mentioned include accessibility and reuse. Note that de Jong & Schellens (1997) propose a number of specific suggestions on which methods are more suitable for which topics (for example, they recommend using the so-called cloze test, see below, if you want to evaluate issues of comprehension).

A third way is to look at the *objectives* of the evaluation, i.e. why the evaluation is done. De Jong & Schellens (1997) distinguish between evaluation methods with a so-called verifying function (aimed at obtaining overall impressions about document quality, which requires a quantitative research design, like in readability formulas), methods with a 'troubleshooting' function (aimed at detecting and diagnosing possible reader problems, which requires a qualitative and exploratory approach) and methods that facilitate a choice between alternatives. Note that all three approaches can lead to various degrees of redesigning, ranging from a simple copyedit or proofread (does the writer stick to accepted language standards in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure?) to a comprehensive edit (a thorough rewrite of the text). As for the why of the evaluation process, I propose a broad perspective, including more general data analyses (even experimental studies) that are not aimed at evaluating (and, potentially, enhancing) the quality of one specific text but that promise to expand our knowledge of a whole genre and indirectly contribute to better future texts.

A final way of looking at the different methods, and the one that I propose to follow here has to do with the question *who* is involved in evaluating. Following Schriver (1989) I suggest three groups: the text-focused evaluation, which could be conducted by anyone (including the writer) or even by means of computer software, the expert-focused approach (involving anyone who can be seen as an expert in the domain of the text) and, of course, a reader-focused approach.

3 Text-focused evaluation

The text-focused evaluation means that the text is examined on the basis of one or more principles that have been developed from ideas about how readers will probably respond (Schriver 1989). This could be done through, for example, readability formulas, which analyse word frequency and sentence length, drawing on the assumption that shorter sentences with more frequently used words are easier to understand. Since such formulas are easy to automate (think of style checkers in word-processing software), Schriver (1989) comments, they involve little or no effort and so they are cheap to implement. For a recent example, see Franck et al. (2011) who developed and tested a semi-automated leaflet optimizer to improve the readability of Dutch-language patient information leaflets. From the beginning, these formulas have been criticized: for one thing, since they operate at the word and sentence levels only, a text will get the same readability score whether its words are arranged in normal or reverse order (Schriver 1989). It should be noted, though, that readability formulas remain very popular in many areas of research outside linguistics, including specialized business and institutional settings like education and finance.

Another type of text-focused evaluation is the use of guidelines and maxims, all of them undoubtedly well-meant do's and don'ts that are typically so vague and that fail to take into account any of the specificity of the reader to the extent that a redesign based on them may well make the original texts worse (cf. Schriver 1989). One such (very popular) guideline is to "omit needless words". An example of a simplistic maxim is the idea of "You attitude" that is so common in advice on business prose. Its limitations are discussed in (2004).

A recent and more sophisticated newcomer to this category is King's (2010) reverse outlining method, which starts from the idea that most text-focused evaluations are done by the writers themselves. Since writers typically find it more difficult to evaluate their own texts than those written by other writers, King's method is aimed at helping them step back and derive an outline, which should allow them to diagnose potential organizational problems, for example by identifying missing or misplaced content. By drawing on the writer's metalinguistic awareness, the approach is primarily a cognitive one and it recycles what is typically a prewriting move (writers normally make outlines before writing, if they make them at all) as a resource for evaluating the finished text itself.

In the master's course I asked the students to use the reverse outlining method to evaluate their business plans but the results were disappointing: most of the students found it odd and counterintuitive to reach towards a higher level of abstraction for their own texts and they felt a distinct need to involve a third party in the evaluation process, one that in one way or another was better placed to judge the quality of their work, which brings us to the other two evaluation ap-

proaches listed by Schriver (1989): expert-focused evaluation and reader-focused evaluation.

4 Expert-focused evaluation

In an expert-focused evaluation professionals with relevant expertise are asked to evaluate the text. Their expertise may be on the subject matter, the medium, or the target audience (de Jong & Lentz 2006). Expert-focused evaluation is commonly used in various institutional contexts. Think of the peer review procedure for the evaluation of manuscripts submitted for publication in academic journals. As most researchers know, this often leads to the frustration of widely divergent opinions. De Jong & Lentz (2006) refer to research on unguided expert evaluation, where the evaluation was entirely open. Typically, the results are disappointing. More recently, two basic strategies for guiding expert evaluation have been developed. The first strategy is heuristic evaluation, which provides the experts with evaluation criteria (for example in the form of checklists) that are likely to represent critical success factors for readers. These criteria can be related to wide-ranging aspects including lay-out and color use, but also usability, accessibility, and information quality (see Donker-Kuijer et al. 2010 on heuristic evaluation of government websites). The other strategy is scenario evaluation, where the experts are placed in a “surrogate-reader” role to help overcome the so-called curse of expertise (both Hinds 1999, quoted in de Jong & Lentz 2006): they are given realistic usage scenarios, which help them to judge a text through the eyes of the target user.

A much-publicized form of heuristic evaluation is Renkema’s CCC, where three general quality criteria (correspondence, consistency, and correctness) are applied to five textual levels (document type, content, structure, wording and presentation), leaving a total of fifteen evaluation points. There is a strong hierarchy in the system: correspondence is more important than consistency, which in turn is more important than correctness. And document type is more important than content etc. ‘Correspondence’ means that the sender achieves a goal and the document fills a need for the receiver (Renkema 2009).

In the master’s course class the text to be evaluated by means of Renkema’s CCC was a job advertisement, announcing a vacancy for a young university graduate to be filled at the start-up for which the students had previously tried to get funding through the business plan. Hence, the goals were clear, on both sides: the writers were trying to encourage potentially suitable new members of staff to apply for the job (in the end they were hoping to hire the perfect applicant), the reader is looking for the right vacancy (and, next, working hard to be hired for it).

When searching for the balance between writer and reader, the writer is in the driving seat, with many different choices. If he or she can maintain those choices through the text and at various levels (structure, words, layout, etc.), he or she will

then score well on the second of the criteria: consistency. The third and final criterion is correctness and it means that there should be no mistakes.

5 Reader-focused evaluation

In reader-focused evaluation research, finally, a text is evaluated by one or more potential members of the target audience. Schriver (1989) distinguishes two categories: concurrent (or real time) evaluation, including the so-called cloze test (where every 5th word is deleted from the text), eye tracking (with the position of the eye presumably corresponding to what is being processed, cf. Elling et al. 2011) and think-aloud protocols (see van den Haak et al. 2009 for an investigation into three variants), and retrospective evaluation, for example by means of interviewing, focus groups or surveys.

Schriver (1989) argues that concurrent testing (or what de Jong and Schellens (1997) call ‘pretesting’) provides the more reliable data, with less (or no) dependence on memory and a greater focus on specific text features (although readers may forget to speak during think-alouds).

De Jong & Schellens (2000) have classified the various methods for reader-focused evaluation differently, distinguishing between methods using task outcome (e.g., comprehension tests), methods using behavioral observation (e.g., think-aloud user protocols), methods using verbal self-reports (e.g., plus-minus method) and methods using a combination of the three (so-called one-to-one evaluation).

More recently, de Jong & Lentz (2005) have separated reader-focused evaluation approaches asking potential readers to *read* a text and, for example, think aloud from reader-focused evaluation approaches to *judge* a text, like the plus-minus method. It should be clear that the former approach is the more natural, with readers reading a text (or customers using a website, for that matter) rather than adopting an evaluative stance that they are not really familiar with.

As elaborately documented and researched by de Jong (1998) the standard procedure for the plus-minus method is to invite one or more members of the target audience to read the entire text and jot down pluses and minuses in the margin whenever he or she feels that a part of the text (ranging from a single word to a whole paragraph, including pictures and graphic elements) is good/positive (well written, funny, clear, ...) or bad/negative (uninteresting, confusing, ugly, ...). The next step is for the researcher to interview the reader and ask him or her to elaborate on the various pluses and minuses.

The plus-minus method may reveal problems at various levels of the text and the topics covered typically include graphic design, correctness, structure, comprehension, acceptance, appreciation, relevance and completeness. The general advice is to take the reader’s feedback seriously. It has been argued that not all the

test reader's problems are real reader problems and they are certainly not all readers' problems so the decision whether to revise the text or not depends on questions of likelihood (how likely is it that more readers will have this problem?), impact (does the problem affect the effectiveness of the text?) and revisability (is there an adequate solution for the problem, one that does not create new problems?) (see de Jong 1998 for a more detailed exposé). Conversely, some reader problems are not the test reader's problems so in theory as many pretests should be conducted as possible, although it is now generally accepted that a mere five test readers can typically detect 80 % of the problems, including the most serious ones (see for example <http://www.nngroup.com/articles/why-you-only-need-to-test-with-5-users/>).

6 Comparing methods for evaluating the quality of verbal communication

A lot has been said about the comparison of the three approaches listed above, text-focused, expert-focused and reader-focused. The consensus is that reader-focused evaluation is the more powerful of the three. De Jong & Lentz 2006 say that both expert-focused and reader-focused types of evaluation will make their own contribution to the quality of texts, but the real proof of quality can best be given by reader-focused evaluation research. They say that some researchers have proposed a sequential order (first conduct an expert-focused evaluation to gather the 'low-hanging fruit', i.e. the quality problems that are easily detectable, and then proceed with a reader-focused evaluation aimed at detecting the really hard-to-find problems). De Jong & Lentz 2006 conclude that expert-focused evaluations are generally more popular than reader-focused evaluations, mainly because they are less time consuming and less expensive (192).

But the three are definitely complementary, as my master students experienced when they were asked to read up on three research projects in the domain of job ads. The first one was Askehave (2010), who examines the quality of a Danish bank's main written recruitment genre, viz. the bank manager job ad, by combining a systemic functionalist linguistic analysis of the ads with semi-structured focus group interviews in which a number of respondents, all presently employed as managers at various levels within the bank, were asked to comment on the ad. In particular, the aim was to explore the match (or mismatch) between the Bank's recruitment needs, its communication strategy and the effect that the recruitment message may have on readers of the ad. While the focus group was actually an expert-focused evaluation (since the respondents were some of the bank's managers and not real job seekers), it did generate a number of interesting new insights that the purely linguistic (text-focused) evaluation didn't.

Earlier, Roberson et al. (2005) had used an experimental design and data from 171 college-level job seekers to show that detailed recruitment messages lead to enhanced perceptions of organization attributes and person-organization (P-O) fit, which in turn affect intention to apply. The practical implications are clear, not just for the design of recruitment advertisements and recruitment brochures but throughout the recruitment process: recruiters had better provide detailed information on what potential employees can expect to receive from the organization (including information about promotion and development opportunities, compensation and benefits, and organizational policies). This may help generate larger pools of applicants who are more likely to accept an offer if extended to them. Clearly, such a reader-focused evaluation is potentially far more powerful than the text-focused and expert-focused evaluations set up by Askehave (2010).

Around the same time as Roberson et al. (2005), tying in with Petrick & Furr's (1995) notion of "total quality in managing human resources", Blackman (2006) set up a similar reader-focused evaluation of job postings by conducting a quasi-experiment with final-year commerce students to see how a number specific variables (including the use of the word graduate in the heading, the use of pictures, and the mention of a career path or opportunities for development and promotion) influence attention to recruitment ads. Again, the benefits of a reader-focused evaluation are clear. At the same time, Blackman does point to the restriction of working with potential readers, in this case all students serving as applicants at the same, pre-experience, career stage and based at a regional Australian university (i.e. one with fewer employment options compared to the capital cities). This comment echoes de Jong & Schellens's (2000) concern on the topic of sample composition, in general, and on the fact that participants' background characteristics may affect the feedback collected.

In other words, of the many variables that quality depends on one extremely important variable is the reader. Put simply: what is a good text for one reader, may be a bad one for another. In an experiment which can be considered a reader-focused evaluation, Jones et al. (2006) have shown that individual jobseekers' decisions about responding to job advertisements are affected by how deeply they process recruitment messages. Drawing on Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model they found out that those who tend to process messages less carefully choose more ads containing cues unrelated to the job (e.g., bolded font), and fewer ads with job-related arguments, leading on to recommendations for recruiters who wish to increase the size of their applicant pool. Note that Jones et al. (2006) use quality in a more narrow sense: "when EL is high, people's attraction to job ads will be influenced primarily by the quality of the recruitment message" (168) and "Low EL among some job seekers may help explain findings showing that job ads are effective when they include features that have little to do with the quality of the recruitment message, such as by outlining ads in black boxes, including more white space and graphics, using bold or colorful fonts, or making the ads larger" (169).

7 Beyond the reader

At this stage it is high time to point out that there is more to communication quality than just serving the audience's needs. So far, all of the methods surveyed have zoomed in on reader understanding. Perhaps Renkema in the CCC model, with its focus on consistency between writer ambitions and reader expectations, was the only one to indicate that communication quality cannot be defined only from the perspective of the receiver (Renkema 1999). In particular, drawing on research into the quality of Dutch tax forms, he argues that research into communication quality should not be confined to what he calls 'assessment research'. It should also incorporate economic research. Put simply, if producing better tax forms costs the government more time and money, then the possible benefits for the public may well be neutralized. Conversely, if the redesigned texts result in fewer phone calls in which citizens ask for more information, the evaluation process will easily pay itself back.

Even more, what is special about many institutional contexts is that the communication is persuasive in addition to (or rather than) informative. In pragmatic terms, the co-operative principle can then be deliberately violated; the maxims may be flouted. Even if persuasive strategies are not necessarily misleading (see Jacobs 2006 as well as in this volume chapters 13 and 25) it should be clear that there is so much more to quality than just understanding. The genre of the so-called 'business plan', which is at the heart of the master's course referred to above, is a case in point: its prime objective is to convince the reader to invest money in the proposed project. Let me therefore briefly turn to work on financial communication to sketch the wider context. While I have so far deliberately abstained from any in-depth discussion of specific institutional settings, I feel it is necessary to briefly dip into the context of finance and accounting to make my final point.

There was a time, Crawford Camiciottoli (2010) argues, when financial filings were just meant to fulfill legal obligations. They were aimed at so-called disclosure, the annual public release of financial results as prescribed by law. Typically, the writers of these mandatory documents didn't even have to worry about being understood. Quality was not an issue. Recently, however, it has started to grow on the management of financial institutions that they do have an interest in being understood since this can contribute to and consolidate a positive corporate image with key stakeholders (including shareholders, investors and customers of course, but also employees and management as well as the news media, all sorts of special interest groups and the general public). So this is where the methods for evaluating verbal communication quality that we have discussed in this chapter may well prove their worth. But this is also where persuasion trickles in: comprehension equals transparency and hence it may promote goodwill, convincing – as Crawford Camiciottoli (2010) argues – potential investors of the good standing and future

worth of the company. She goes on to show how this has led to the emergence of voluntary forms of pro-active disclosure especially in the wake of high-profile financial scandals as well as the recent financial crisis with the subsequent loss of confidence in financial markets. As a result, financial communication has become a field of academic interest in its own right, putting out language-oriented research on annual general meetings of shareholders, live earnings announcements and earnings presentations via teleconferencing, CEOs' letters to shareholders, annual reports, shareholder circulars, press releases. In this respect, Bhatia (2008) distinguishes between so-called 'accounting discourse', which is backward-looking, standard and legally required, and 'public relations discourse', which also tends to look forward and which goes well beyond what the company has to say). Hyland (1998) presents a relatively early example of a study of *how CEOs attempt to influence readers by projecting a positive personal and corporate image in company annual reports. While he suggests a descriptive framework (i.e. one that refrains from coming up with recommendations for practitioners), Hyland's analysis of metadiscourse (including the use of linking words like 'therefore' and 'nevertheless') does point to persuasive potential of certain specific language choices.*

And so we have reached the limits of our methods for evaluating the quality of communication since what may be good for the writer can be bad for the reader (and the other way round). Also, we may have found a reason why many linguistic pragmatic researchers have steered clear from evaluating the quality of verbal communication in institutional contexts: since most of this is a non-collaborative negotiation, a struggle for power, quality becomes a multi-faceted, ambivalent notion.

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John O. Greene

27 Oral communication skills

Abstract: Oral communication skill has been a subject of human fascination for thousands of years, encompassing a broad range of specific competencies and levels of analysis that make it a central concern of a number of scholarly disciplines. The focus of this chapter is oral proficiency among adult, first-language speakers, who would typically be characterized as “normal” with respect to their intellectual and psychological functioning. As an aid in navigating such an expansive terrain, five fundamental observations, or points of reference, are invoked: 1. oral communication skills matter, 2. such skills involve proficiencies in carrying out identifiable communicative functions, 3. people differ, with some degree of consistency, in their communicative proficiencies, 4. sources of skill deficits can be identified, and 5. proficiencies can be improved.

Keywords: communication competence, communication effectiveness, communication skill, communication skill training, goals-plans-action (GPA) models, interpersonal skill, message production, skill acquisition

1 Introduction

The literature on “oral communication skills” is truly vast – the subject has been the object of human scrutiny for millennia, and it encompasses an enormous range of behavioral phenomena and levels of analysis. Consider that, according to Hargie (2006a: 2), treatises on effective communication date to ancient Egypt and that discourses on persuasion techniques from the Greek Classical Age (some two millennia later) remain among the canon of Western literature to the present day. This same concern with enhancing communication effectiveness (in both mediated and public-speaking contexts) was the primary driver in the development of communication (speech, journalism) departments in American universities in the early twentieth century (see Delia 1987) and even now continues as a major focus of research and instruction in those institutions.¹

And again, if the subject of oral communication skills has a long history, it is also enormously (almost impossibly) broad. Consider that the domain encompasses changes across the lifespan, from children’s language acquisition to decrements in encoding abilities in old age – both areas with extensive research traditions (see

¹ A useful overview of developments in scholarly approaches to *interpersonal* communication skill is found in Spitzberg and Cupach (2011).

Kemper and Schmalzried 2008; Lust 2011). Similarly, research on second language acquisition is, at root, driven by a concern with message skill. In a different vein, “oral communication skills” also encompasses the spectrum of disciplines devoted to the study of message proficiency in populations with various psychological disorders and physiological impairments (see Bachman and Cannon 2005).

Even if we restrict our focus to verbal message production among “normal” populations of adults (my intention in what follows)², the task remains rather daunting. The notion that speech and talk may be more or less proficient lends itself to an entire spectrum of levels of analysis ranging from basic mechanisms of speech production, to rules of syntax and grammar, to strategies for influencing the attitudes and behavior of both individuals and larger groups. Moreover, virtually every domain and context of human social endeavor lends itself to analysis in terms of the quality of what people say and how they say it. To illustrate, books devoted to surveying research on communication skill (e.g., Greene and Burleson 2003; Hargie 2006d) include chapters on “explaining,” “negotiating and bargaining,” “interviewing,” “arguing,” “persuading,” “parenting,” “group decision making,” “managing conflict,” “managing romantic relationships,” and on and on. In short, if humans do it with talk, there is almost certainly a literature on what it means to do it well.

2 The significance of oral communication skills: Instrumental goal achievement, relational outcomes, and personal well-being

Humankind’s longstanding fascination with communication skill, and the breadth of systematic examinations of such skills, are the products of the simple fact that skills matter – oral communication skills are related to a host of positive outcomes and conditions. And this seems to be something that people have recognized from the get-go: We learn in the fourth chapter of Exodus, for example, that Moses understood that his followers would not believe him because he was a slow speaker. And, in point of fact, considerable empirical evidence indicates that Moses was correct in his assumption that fluency is related to credibility and persuasiveness (see, for example: Burgoon, Birk and Pfau 1990; Street and Brady 1982).

Moreover, the effects of oral communication skill are not limited to persuasion contexts, and in fact, such skills are related to greater success in accomplishing a variety of instrumental objectives. Consider, for example, the effectiveness and sal-

² By the same token, by restricting the focus to oral communication skills, I shall not endeavor to address issues of writing skills.

utary outcomes associated with the master teacher's proficiency at explanation, the experienced reporter's ability to pose probing questions, and the seasoned therapist's skill in offering advice and counsel.

Everyday intuition about the importance of oral message skill is borne out by studies of communication competency in a variety of contexts. As just one example, surveys of employers consistently show that oral communication skills (or more generally in some cases, "communication skills") are rated at, or very near, the top of desirable attributes for prospective hires (e.g., Maes, Weldy and Icenogle 1997; O'Neil, Allred and Baker 1997). Not surprisingly, then, various aspects of oral communication skill have been shown to be related to success in the employment interview (e.g., Ugbeh and Evuleocha 1992), and once hired, to job performance (e.g., Kolb 1996; Papa 1989) and upward mobility in the workplace (e.g., Sypher and Zorn 1986).

But the positive impact of communication skills is not limited to accomplishing instrumental objectives like persuading, teaching, or success in one's career. Beyond the task dimension of social interaction, message-production skills are also related to both relational satisfaction and personal well-being. With respect to the first of these, evidence suggests that children with poor communication skills are less popular (see Burleson, Delia and Applegate 1992; Hartup 1989) and that, in young adulthood, lower levels of interpersonal competence are associated with higher levels of loneliness (e.g., Segrin and Flora 2000; Spitzberg and Hunt 1987). Moreover, skill deficits are associated with less success in dating and marital relationships (see Burleson 1995; Burleson and Denton 1997; Flora and Segrin 1999). Indeed, negative interaction patterns have been shown to be substantially related to marital distress and divorce (see Bradbury, Fincham and Beach 2000), although the nonverbal features of couple communication may outweigh those of the verbal channel in this regard (see Kelly, Fincham and Beach 2003).

Finally, in light of the fact that communication skill is related to instrumental and material success, and to the number and quality of one's close relationships, it should not be surprising that there is considerable evidence relating various aspects of communication skill to people's psychological and physiological well-being, including factors such as negative self-perceptions and social anxiety (see Patterson and Ritts 1997), depression (see Segrin 2000), and even in some cases, conditions such as alcoholism (e.g., Miller and Eisler 1977; Nixon, Tivis and Parsons 1992) and cardiovascular disease (Ewart, Taylor, Kraemer and Agras 1991). Clearly caution is in order in drawing conclusions about direction of causality in much of this research, and observed effect sizes in some studies are small (see Segrin 1999), but overall, it does appear that various aspects of communication skill are related to personal adjustment and well-being.

3 The concept of “oral communication skills”: Issues of proficiency

At first blush one might assume that the very notion of oral communication skills is an intuitively obvious and readily tractable concept – after all, each of us has encountered individuals we can readily identify as eloquent speakers, or people with a knack for casual conversation, and even those who can “spin a good yarn” (or conversely, those who “can’t tell a joke”). And yet nailing down the essence of skilled message-making has proven to be a slippery enterprise marked by controversy and dispute (see Hargie 2006b; Sanders 2003; Wilson and Sabee 2003). Indeed, one writer notes that “few concepts are as difficult to define and assess as interpersonal skills” (Spitzberg 2003: 93), and another pair of authors questions whether an adequate definition of “social skills” might ever be developed (Segrin and Givertz 2003: 136).

3.1 What will count as “skill”?

The elusiveness of “communication skill,” or, more to the present point, “oral communication skill,” is the product of at least four factors – two that might be thought of as ultimately deriving from potential construals or characterizations of the message behavior itself, and two that can be seen as ramifications of social context. Regarding the former, the first factor concerns the fact that oral message behavior is not a unitary “thing”, enacted with some level of skill, but rather an amalgam of numerous components, some of which may reflect greater proficiency than others: As a familiar example, one’s command of vocabulary may outstrip his or her abilities in pronunciation. Distinct from the fact that message behavior involves multiple components is the fact that it lends itself to analysis at multiple levels of abstraction. Thus, a single utterance might be characterized at low levels of abstraction in terms of adherence to rules of grammar, or at a more abstract level, in terms of the degree to which it reflects a command of conventions of politeness and face-work, or even more abstractly, in terms of its level of sophistication in social perspective-taking.

Turning to issues associated with social context, a third factor contributing to difficulties in defining or identifying characteristics of oral communication skill is quite simply the number and variety of communicative activities in which people engage. To illustrate, consider that what constitutes “skillful” communication in doctor-patient interactions, collegiate debate, and poker-game kibitzing may be markedly distinct. Finally, the picture is further complicated by the fact that what constitutes “skillful message behavior” is contextually contingent. This last is the elusive “except when” or “it depends” aspect of communication skill: No matter what is usually the most appropriate or effective course of action, there will always

be cases where the converse is true; for example, what might count as rude, even boorish, in polite company might be the very act that serves to define and cement a close and (mutually) satisfying interpersonal relationship.

The upshot of these various considerations is that attempts to catalogue oral communication skills are likely to be, at once, both incomplete and unwieldy. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the project of surveying and imposing some conceptual order on the area is dead in the water. In the remainder of this section and the next, then, I want to turn to a pair of simple propositions that should afford some purchase on the issues at hand.

3.2 Standards of oral communication proficiency

At the very foundation of the notion of "skill" is the idea that a person may be more or less proficient at *doing something*. Thus, the skilled craftsman, athlete, or surgeon is able to carry out certain tasks in a competent manner. Let us take as our first organizing principle, then, that *oral communication skills center on the ability to carry out communicative functions in proficient ways*. The proposition is seemingly obvious, but it serves to foreground an essential question: Standards of excellence for craftsmen, athletes, and physicians are rather discernable, but in the domain of oral communication skills, what are the functions that might be carried out poorly or well? There are various ways that one might address this issue (e.g., Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg and Reis 1988; Heggstad and Morrison 2008; Spitzberg and Cupach 2011), but a four-tiered hierarchical scheme provides a principled and parsimonious approach to the question.

At the most fundamental level, oral communication skill involves proficiency with respect to production standards – that is, the ability to produce intelligible, fluent discourse. It is at the level of speaking intelligibly that issues of enunciation, working vocabulary, grammar, accent, and so on, come to the fore. But beyond basic competencies in making oneself understood on a micro-level, sentence-by-sentence (or clause-by-clause) basis, production standards also encompass abilities related to constructing macro-level sequences, such as stories and arguments, that can be followed by others (see Kintsch 1998; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983).

The second level of the functional hierarchy involves abilities related to interleaving one's own actions with those of his or her interlocutor(s). These regulatory functions include topic management, interaction initiation and termination, and especially, turn-taking. Unlike first-level functions, where the ability to produce intelligible utterances seems an obvious and necessary component of oral skill, regulatory proficiency may not seem as readily apparent, but, in point of fact, the significance of these functions is difficult to overestimate. Indeed, in his seminal essay on communication competence, Wiemann (1977) identified interaction regulation as the *sine qua non* ('without which there is nothing') of competent interaction.

Beyond abilities pertaining to production of intelligible utterances and social coordination, a third level of competencies involves establishing a mutually acceptable working definition of what might be termed “social reality” – the backdrop of the interaction that grounds and makes sensible the actions of the participants. As such, social reality can be seen to involve at least four components: 1. presentation of self, 2. presentation of one’s view of the other (e.g., his or her knowledge and expertise, interests, etc.), 3. presentation of one’s construal of the nature of the relationship that exists between self and other (e.g., friends, lovers, opponents, etc.), and 4. presentation of one’s interpretation of the nature of the social setting (i.e. situational exigencies, social rules, etc.). Effective presentation and negotiation of each of these elements, then, involves standards of proficiency, many of which pertain to the verbal realm – what one says and how he or she says it.

The final level of the proficiency hierarchy involves abilities related to achieving interaction goals in an effective and appropriate manner. Thus, the sales representative is able to “close the deal,” the politician is able to sway the undecided, and the traffic offender can talk his or her way out of a ticket. But it is not enough simply to be effective – the twin consideration here is social appropriateness. Consider that a person might accomplish some objective, but do so by threatening, bullying, or belittling another, or by otherwise acting unethically. It is this fourth hierarchical level, and the interplay of effectiveness and appropriateness, that has traditionally dominated discussion of communication proficiency among scholars in the field of Communication (see Rubin 1990; Segrin and Givertz 2003; Spitzberg and Cupach 2011; Wiemann 1977).

There are various ways that the specific components or processes underlying effective and appropriate goal pursuit might be described, but one widely recognized and influential approach is found in goals-plans-action models (G-P-A; see Berger 1995; Dillard 1990; Greene 2000; Greene and Graves 2007). On this view, situationally bound objectives (to make a sale, sway voters, or avoid a ticket) give rise to plans for achieving those objectives, which, in turn, drive mechanisms for enacting those plans. Proficiencies, then, involve realistic goal-setting, accurate anticipation of others’ reactions, formulating and choosing between alternative courses of action, and the ability to actually implement one’s plans via overt behavior (see Wilson 2002).

4 Oral communication skills: Issues of acquisition and enactment

In Section 2.1 above I noted that, despite the fact that surveying the domain of oral communication skills is a rather formidable task, it might be possible to make some progress by working from a pair of simplest first propositions (i.e. “to start at the

very beginning” as it were). Thus, the idea that “oral communication skills center on the ability to carry out communicative functions in proficient ways” was used to provide a conceptual point of departure for identifying a parsimonious typology of four clusters of social/communicative functions (and attendant proficiencies).

Like the first foundational observation, the second is seemingly equally apparent – and as consequential in its implications. Consider that just as with skilled musicianship, dance, or what have you, *capacities for performing well at message-making are acquired, possessed, and enacted by the individual*. An essential corollary of this point is that the person skilled in some domain of oral communication not only performs well, he or she is also able to do so with some *consistency* – the skillful communicator exhibits a degree of regularity in the quality of his or her performance.

4.1 Acquisition of oral communication skill

As noted at the outset, my intention here is to limit the focus of discussion to adult, native-language speakers, free of physiological anomalies, both central (i.e. neural) and peripheral (i.e. articulatory), related to speech production, and who would be typically be characterized as “normal” with respect to their intellectual and psychological functioning.³ Given this seemingly restricted population, one might assume that individual differences in oral communication skills would be minimal, and that skill deficits would be rather rare. But this conjecture is refuted by both everyday experience and by research on the prevalence of communication problems. With regard to the former, as previously noted, we all recognize that people exhibit a range of levels of skill in public speaking, small talk, parenting, teaching, and so on. Moreover, studies of skill deficits reveal that a substantial number of people, even college students, exhibit problems in such fundamental communication tasks as asking a question or giving directions (see Spitzberg & Cupach 2011).

The fact that we do find variations in levels of message-production proficiencies brings to the fore the question of the source(s) of such individual differences. As with the problem of delineating communication functions discussed above (Section 2.2), there are any number of ways, representing varying levels of parsimony and elegance, that one might address the etiology of skill differences (see, for example: Hargie 2006c; Liberman, DeRisi and Mueser 1989; Trower, Bryant and Argyle 1978), but holding to the premise that oral communication skills are acquired affords a principled way of organizing discussion of the sources of variations in proficiency – and of eventually arriving at the heart of the question of why some people consistently exhibit more proficient behavior than others.

³ Even so, much of what follows can be seen to apply to skill acquisition among other populations.

The scheme I want to propose consists of three levels, the first consisting of relatively enduring person-factors such as temperament (see Buss and Plomin 1984), personality traits (see Digman 1990), various intellectual capacities (see McGrew 2009), and so on. Factors at this first level are not, themselves, oral communication skills, but they may either: (1) facilitate skill acquisition, or (2) predispose individuals to acquire such skills. As an example, consider that extraversion, in and of itself, is not a skill (indeed, extraverts may exhibit any number of performance deficits, e.g., over-disclosure, talking too much, etc.), but, on balance, we might expect to find that individuals high in the propensity to engage others and to enjoy social interaction are more likely to exhibit various oral proficiencies, and this does appear to be the case (e.g., Siegman 1978; Thorne 1987).

Dispositional and information-processing contributions to individual variations in message skill are overlaid by a second set of factors, these derived from people's social (and quasi-social) experiences. It is at this level that influences such as parenting styles, family communication patterns, peer influences, and even media portrayals of social interaction come into play. Here it is possible to distinguish two broad sub-categories of socially derived influences. On one hand, social interaction is a source of conceptions of how to speak and what to say. Adopting the behavior of others as models, through overt instruction and admonishment, and in other ways, we learn how to conduct ourselves. At the same time, social experiences also impact message skill via self-relevant mechanisms such as self-esteem and self-efficacy – the idea being that such self-relevant conceptions are formed, at least to some extent, by interaction with others, and that these self-relevant conceptual frames, in turn, impact message behavior.

Finally, at the third level of the proposed hierarchy are factors directly related actual behavioral production. As noted in the preceding paragraph, second-level influences include conceptions of what to do and say, but the real trick, of course, is to actually implement those conceptions in overt behavior (see Greene 2000, 2006). Third-level factors contributing to individual variations in performance, then, are those that bear on people's ability to translate abstract conceptions of action into behaviors that meet the standards of proficiency outlined above. Specification of the exact nature of these translational mechanisms varies from theory to theory (and exposition of those various frameworks would take us well beyond the scope of this chapter; see Greene and Graves 2007), but in one way or another, virtually every theory gives emphasis to the role of experience or practice in the production of skilled behavior.

4.1.1 Practice/implementation and the acquisition of oral communication skill

Oral communication skills do not simply appear, in an instant, fully developed and ready for use. Rather, they emerge over time as a result of implementation and

successive refinement. Thus the performance of the experienced teacher, interviewer, or negotiator will almost certainly exceed that of the novice. Studies of the course of oral communication skill acquisition typically involve examination of various temporal indices before (e.g., speech-onset latency) and/or after (e.g., speech rate, pause/phonation ratio) speech begins, assessments of dysfluencies and other speech errors (e.g., mispronunciations, restarts), filled pauses (e.g., “er”, “um”), and sociocentric sequences (e.g., “you know”, “or whatever”).⁴ The research in this area indicates that the course of skill acquisition is marked by a number of behavioral and cognitive changes (see Greene 2003), including, among others: (1) greater speed (as in the case of higher speech rates), (2) greater accuracy (e.g., fewer dysfluencies and speech errors), (3) greater flexibility (e.g., the ability to adapt one’s message behavior to meet situational exigencies), and (4) reduced cognitive load associated with message formulation.

A great deal of research (see Lane 1987; Newell and Rosenbloom 1981) on the nature of the function relating amount of practice (X axis) and performance quality (Y axis) in domains other than communication skills indicates that this relationship is described by a general power function given by the equation:

$$P = A - B N^{-\alpha}$$

where P represents performance quality, B is the level of performance with no practice (i.e. the Y intercept), N is the number of practice trials, α is the learning-rate parameter (indicating the steepness of the skill-acquisition curve), and A is the performance asymptote (representing some hypothetical optimal level of performance). Graphically, this equation describes a decelerating curve where early performance gains are substantial, but with each successive practice trial, performance improvements diminish, and eventually the learning curve approaches the asymptotic limit.

One of the implications of this “power law of practice” is that the process of achieving truly expert performance in many skill domains is much more protracted than one might suppose. Indeed, the equation above says, in effect, *if performance improves by some factor, x , in n trials, then it will take $n(n - 1)$ additional practice trials for performance to improve by a factor, x , again*. To illustrate, suppose that the quality of one’s performance doubled (improved by a factor of 2) in 100 practice sessions. By the power law of practice, it would take 9,900 more sessions [i.e. 100 (100 – 1)] to once again double the quality of his or her performance. In light of this fundamental regularity it is not surprising that research indicates that achieving truly expert performance in a variety of skill domains requires 10 years of focused preparation (see Ericsson and Lehman 1996).

⁴ See Greene (1988) for an extended discussion various measures of cognitive processing involved in speech production.

Various models have been developed to account for the course of skill development described by the power law, but, specific details aside, the general idea is that skill acquisition proceeds through three stages (see Anderson 1983). In the first stage, a person learns a set of facts or rules about how to carry out the skill, and by keeping these rules about what to do in mind, it is possible to execute the skill, albeit in a slow and error-prone fashion. In the second stage, the person begins to acquire skill-specific procedural memory structures such that it is no longer necessary to keep the rules for performing the skill in mind while carrying out that activity. Finally, as a result of continued implementation, these procedural memory structures are refined and strengthened such that performance becomes increasingly rapid, accurate, and effortless.

The significance of the power law of practice in the context of the present discussion is that, although there are relatively few studies of oral-communication-skill acquisition that involve performance improvements over more than a handful of practice trials, where such studies have been conducted, they indicate that, just as for other skill domains, message-production-skill acquisition is characterized by a power function (see Greene 2003). For example, in one study (Greene, Sassi, Malek-Madani and Edwards 1997, Study 1) subjects learned a simple six-step organizing sequence for describing geometric arrays – a skill not unlike learning a sequence of steps for conducting an interview or giving a persuasive speech.⁵ Each person then applied this new skill in a series of 150 trials, describing a new array each time. The results indicated that, aggregating over subjects, a power function accounted for more than 90 percent of the variance in message-production performance.

4.1.2 Person factors and skill acquisition

One of the chief insights to be gleaned from understanding that the course of skill acquisition is characterized by a power function is that there are individual differences in the skill-acquisition parameters that describe that function. That is, people differ in the values of α (the learning-rate parameter), B (quality of initial performance), A (asymptotic performance level), and so on. The person factors that potentially bear upon skill acquisition are numerous, and the picture is further complicated by the fact that any particular individual-difference variable may play a role at one of the three stages of skill acquisition discussed above, and yet not be particularly important at one or both of the other stages (see Ackerman 1990; Mumford, Baughman, Uhlman and Threlfall 1993). As previously noted, to date there

⁵ As in other studies employing this experimental paradigm, novel sequences for organizing message content were employed in order to eliminate effects of prior experience and to ensure that skill acquisition was being observed from its inception.

have been relatively few studies of oral-communication-skill acquisition that involve a sufficient number of performance trials to lend themselves to analysis of learning-curve parameters, but where such studies do exist they suggest that relatively enduring person factors (e.g., personality traits and information-processing abilities), state variables (e.g., communication anxiety), and a person's age (i.e. younger versus older adults) impact his or her skill learning (see Greene 2003).

4.1.3 Training programs and conditions of practice

The idea that communication skills (oral and otherwise) can be improved through training (instruction, practice, etc.) lies at the very core what legitimates and informs activities in sales-training classes, professional development seminars, relationship counseling sessions, and university courses in departments of communication, child development and family studies, and numerous others. Students pursuing professions in education, human relations, management, social services, and patient care (as ready examples) will doubtless encounter a curriculum predicated to a considerable extent on the idea that performance in their occupations requires good communication skills and that these skills can be learned.

In light of widespread recognition of the importance of communication-skills training it should not be surprising that much attention has been given to identifying key elements of such training programs. In a comprehensive review of the area, Segrin and Givertz (2003) conclude that well-developed programs typically include: 1. initial assessment of performance requirements and individuals' current proficiencies, 2. instruction concerning attributes of desirable performance, 3. presentation of models of proficient and inadequate behavior, 4. practice in the form of role-playing, homework assignments, and so on, and 5. follow-up assessments of skill-retention and transfer.

The importance of opportunity for practice in oral-communication-skill acquisition can hardly be overstated. As was noted above (Section 3.1.1) communication skills emerge over time, through use and refinement. Indeed, at least as early as the pioneering work of Michael Argyle and his associates (e.g., Trower, Bryant and Argyle 1978), it was recognized that "practice is essential" (p. 71) for social-skill acquisition. And, courses in public speaking, group discussion, interviewing, or what have you virtually always reflect the (often implicit) assumption that multiple exercises and performance trials need to be built into class activities. It is important to keep in mind, however, that not all practice/implementation is equally effective.⁶ In the more general universe of studies of skill-acquisition (e.g., musician-

⁶ "Effective" in this context should be understood to reference multiple distinct learning outcomes that don't always co-vary (that is, conditions of practice that facilitate certain outcomes may actually impede others; see Greene 2003). At minimum we can distinguish: 1. short-term acquisition of

ship, chess, motor skills) there is an extensive body of work on the characteristics of more and less effective types of practice, but this is much less true of adult, first-language-speaker acquisition of oral communication skills where patterns or conditions of practice/implementation are rarely examined or pitted against alternative regimens. Nevertheless, with all due caveats, it is at least plausible to extrapolate beyond the broader domain of studies of skill acquisition to arrive at some general principles concerning the characteristics of more effective conditions of practice/implementation for oral communication skills: 1. *focused practice* – implementation trials are more effective when, rather than “going through the motions,” people attend to the details of what they are saying and how they are saying it; 2. *practice with variety* – focused practice is cognitively demanding and difficult to sustain, as a result, implementation exercises should introduce an element of novelty, even as they ultimately center on some focal skill; 3. *practice with spacing* – as an extension of the preceding point, because focused practice is difficult to sustain, implementation opportunities should be spaced to reduce cognitive fatigue and facilitate memory consolidation; 4. *task simplification* – many oral communication “skills” are, in fact, composites of various sub-skills, so much so that attempting to learn the overarching skill is dauntingly difficult; for this reason, implementation regimens may need to involve “segmentation” and “fractionalization” of component activities (as, for example, when interviewers work on building skills relevant to various phases of employment interviews; see Stevens 1998); and 5. *timely feedback* – skill acquisition is facilitated when people are provided information about both what they did (i.e. the characteristics of their own behavior), and the outcomes or results of their actions (e.g., credibility ratings, customer evaluations).⁷

4.2 Enactment of oral communication skill

To catch our bearings, Section 3 of this chapter is concerned with sources of individual differences in message-production proficiency (and most directly with what were termed “third-level factors” in Section 3.1). To this point the discussion has centered on the role of *skill-acquisition processes* (i.e. modeling, instruction, practice, etc.) in contributing to skilled behavior. The essential thrust of the discussion has been that people need to have some understanding (even if only tacit) of what to do and multiple opportunities to implement and refine that knowledge.

But third-level factors (i.e. those that bear directly on actual enactment of proficient behavior) are not limited to adequate conceptions of what one should do, and how to do it. Among other candidate factors theorized to bear upon the quality

skills, 2. long-term skill retention, and 3. transfer of skills from the training/learning context to “real-life” situations.

⁷ See Greene (2003) for a more detailed exposition of these points.

of oral communication performance, the most common are various conceptions of *motivational influences* – the idea being that in order to communicate in a proficient fashion, an individual must not only know what to do, but must also be motivated to actually engage in that action (see Greene and Geddes 1993). Thus, a person might learn strategies for use in bargaining sessions (e.g., logrolling, expanding the pie), but in the heat of an exchange, or with egos on the line, have little interest in applying those techniques.

Beyond various motivationally based constructs thought to underlie performance deficits, other sorts of factors are also proposed to play a role in sub-optimal communicative performance. In many cases, these additional factors are foregrounded in theories of message production which emphasize the idea that rather than a unitary and seamless act, message behavior is, at any instant, an amalgam of numerous component elements (e.g., Greene 2000; Vallacher and Wegner 1987). Examples of sources of performance deficits in theories such as these are numerous (see Greene and Geddes 1993), but they include factors such as: 1. the ability to flexibly allocate attention to relevant aspects of one's behavior, 2. an inability to suppress or override more readily available, but less appropriate, responses, and 3. difficulties in combining or integrating various features of one's actions.

5 Conclusion: Making our way in the realm of oral communication skills

This chapter began with the observation that the domain of “oral communication skills” is both tremendously broad and an enduring subject of human scrutiny. These characteristics make the task of surveying the topic in a single, brief chapter an undertaking that is, to say the least, challenging. Potential approaches to such a project might involve either (or both) attempts to: 1. trace key theoretical developments or lines of thought, or 2. catalogue research findings about which we can have some degree of confidence, as in Greene and Burleson (2003) and Hargie (2006). A third alternative, and the approach ultimately adopted for use here, is founded in a conception of two diametric states of affairs that one might encounter in attempting to map some terrain. At one pole is a domain that is virtually trackless; at the other is an expanse so tracked-over that, like bootprints in the snow meandering in all directions, there is no discernable path to follow. Either extreme suggests the same course of action: Whether little is mapped (studied, theorized, debated), or many differing maps are drawn (“this way!,” “here!,” “no, here!”), the task reduces to identifying essential landmarks or points of reference for making one's way.

The strategy here, then, has been to identify a small number of “first principles” to guide our discussion. Without attempting to re-hash these in detail, our essential reference points look something like this: 1. oral communication skills

matter, 2. such skills involve proficiencies in carrying out identifiable communicative functions, 3. people differ, with some degree of consistency, in their communicative proficiencies, 4. sources of skill deficits can be identified, and 5. proficiencies can be improved (and improvement is likely to be enhanced under certain conditions). And, as a final note, if these fundamental principles provide a means of navigating the expanse of what has been done in the study of oral communication skills, they might also guide us in what is to come.

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Mary Jo Reiff

28 Written communication skills

Abstract: This chapter presents the state of the art of the research on writing skills from a rhetorical and genre perspective. The chapter considers writing instruction in academic contexts and professional writing contexts and focuses on research studies that explore both the cognitive and social dimensions of written communication. It highlights research that examines the development of genre learning in academic and professional contexts, the relationship between genre knowledge and performance, and the ways in which genre knowledge is socially situated and culturally mediated. The chapter concludes with a discussion of methodologies in rhetorical genre studies and applications to teaching writing based on a rhetorical genre approach.

Keywords: writing research, genre, Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), cognitive, social, professional genres, academic genres, teaching writing

1 Introduction

Within the field of Rhetoric and Composition, a rich body of research has accumulated that explores the history of writing, the cognitive and social dimensions of written communication, and the function of writing within academic, professional, and public communities. An aggregate of this research can be found in Charles Bazerman's *Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text* (2008) or Peter Smagorinsky's *Research on Composition: Multiple Perspectives on Two Decades of Change* (2006). In addition, recent volumes based on the international Writing Research across Borders (WRAB) conference feature a variety of empirically grounded and conceptually focused work from different research traditions and different regions (Bazerman et al. 2010, 2012). Within the context of this diverse body of writing research has emerged a research tradition exploring the role of genre in written communication, which will be the focus of this chapter. While researchers in Systemic Functional Linguistics or SFL (Cope and Kalantzis 1993; Macken-Horarik 2002; Martin 1997; Martin and Rose 2008) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Cheng 2007; Johns 2002; Swales 1990; Tardy 2009) have made significant contributions to theoretical and pedagogical perspectives on genre, this chapter will focus on Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), which refers to the body of genre theory, research, and scholarship that has developed primarily in North America over the past three decades. This rhetorical perspective on genre has its origins in Carolyn Miller's (1984)

groundbreaking redefinition of genre as a typified response to a recurring rhetorical situation and reconceptualization of genres as social actions. The recognition of how formal features are connected to social purposes and the ensuing investigations of texts in their social contexts have informed the study and teaching of writing. Over the past 30 years, genre research has contributed substantially to our understanding of: 1. how learners acquire academic and workplace genres; 2. how writers negotiate generic differences in order to perform across multiple contexts; and 3. how genres carry out social purposes and coordinate social actions. This chapter will explore the state of the art of research on writing skills from a rhetorical genre perspective, with a focus on both cognitive and social perspectives and with an emphasis on the exploration of writing in both educational and professional contexts.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that, despite the organization of the following sections into cognitive and social approaches, genre has been defined as a socio-cognitive phenomenon that encompasses both knowledge of rhetorical and formal conventions of genres and knowledge of how to strategically use an understanding of genre to participate in communities – what Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin have defined as a form of “situated cognition” (1993: 485). As Charles Bazerman explains, genres both “shape the thoughts we form” and shape “the communications by which we interact” (1997: 19). From the scholarship on RGS has emerged a view of genres as both cognitive tools that writers draw on to recognize, encounter, and make sense of situations and as social or cultural artifacts that coordinate social actions and carry out social purposes. Such a complex and multi-dimensional understanding of genre has challenged RGS scholars to consider how to teach genre in ways that recognize this complexity. The following sections focus on research that examines the development of genre learning in academic and professional contexts, the relationship between genre knowledge and performance, and the ways in which genre knowledge is socially situated and culturally mediated, along with the implications of this research for teaching writing.

2 Cognitive research on academic genres and writing

In “Genre and Cognitive Development: Beyond Writing to Learn,” Bazerman emphasizes the function of genres as cognitive tools, stating that “genres identify a problem space for the developing writer to work in as well as provide the form of the solution the writer seeks and particular tools useful in the solution” (2009: 291). Drawing on Vygotskian theories and perspectives on the “Writing to Learn” movement, Bazerman notes that genres may function as resources for learning and tools for gaining access to writing situations. Miller further acknowledges the role

of genre in learning when she states that “what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have” (1984: 165). The following sections focus on research studies of how genre learning develops, how genres may function as resources for learning, and how this learning may be applied and used in new writing contexts.

2.1 Development of genre knowledge in academic contexts

Many studies have examined the way in which genre learning is connected to cognitive development. Research on the role of genre in children’s literacy development has focused primarily on the genre of narrative, the development of narrative writing skills, and the relationship between narrative and non-narrative genre development (Donovan and Smolkin 2008). Aviva Freedman’s early research (1987) on narrative structure and the development of storytelling focused on the writing of students at three grade levels – 5th grade (10–11 year olds), 8th grade (13–14 year olds) and 12th grade (17–18 year olds) – and in two different modes: “true” stories (based on personal experience) and invented stories. She found that there was “an increasing realization with age of the ideal form of story structure” but that the task of incorporating story structure for “true” stories was more cognitively challenging than for invented stories. She concludes, “Writing is a complex act, not simply because it involves the orchestration of many processes and subprocesses, but also because it engages the individual at various levels – cognitive, affective, moral” (166).

Sally Mitchell and Richard Andrews (1994) have also explored genre learning as a developmental process, charting the transition of students from writing historical narratives to more complex cognitive and rhetorical tasks of writing historical analyses and arguments. Within the context of the Cambridge History Project, a British secondary education project that emphasizes both historical knowledge and disciplinary skills, they examined history essays that grew increasingly complex with each assignment, following Bloom’s (1956) cognitive levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. With an interest in how students’ learning or acquisition of a genre equates to performance, they found that genre knowledge – knowledge about the typified conventions of an argument – does not necessarily translate to genre performance – being able to think analytically and to produce argumentative genres.

Further studies of learning within a genre-based framework of writing instruction have clarified this distinction between genre knowledge and awareness of how to effectively deploy genre strategies in particular rhetorical and social situations. In his case studies of four international graduate students in engineering and other fields, An Cheng (2007) studied how writers used their analysis of research articles to replicate generic features (of introductions and literature reviews) as they wrote

three different versions of a research article introduction for varying rhetorical contexts. Based on his results, he distinguishes between “knowing genres” – acquisition of genre types and features – and “understanding genres” (or genre awareness) – “an awareness of how rhetorical considerations lead to the appropriate use of the multitude of genres and their respective generic features” (Cheng 2007: 304). Research that explores this relationship between genre knowledge and performance is discussed in the following section.

2.2 Genre knowledge and performance

Building on studies that examine the development of genre knowledge and genre learning, several studies have examined how genres function as tools or resources for gaining access to and performing in new writing situations. Bazerman notes, “Genre is a tool for getting at the resources the students bring with them, the genres they carry from their educations and their experiences in society, and it is a tool for framing challenges that bring students into new domains that are as yet for them unexplored, but not so different from what they know as to be unintelligible” (1997: 24). The accumulation of research on genre knowledge and performance confirms this complex relationship while also demonstrating that genre knowledge does not necessarily always translate to successful performance. In their recent study of the role of previous genre knowledge in the performance of incoming engineering students, Natasha Artemeva and Janna Fox (2010) focused on incoming students’ abilities to identify genres and to produce the genre of the technical report, which only a small percentage of students had previously written. Students in an engineering communication course were given a diagnostic assessment that asked them to read five passages on the same topic (the Challenger Shuttle disaster) and identify the genre; they were then asked to write a short technical report on the topic. The findings revealed that, even though the majority of students (77 %) confidently identified the rhetorical and textual features of a technical report, this expertise did not translate to their ability to write a technical report: “Overall, students’ awareness of genre differences and their ability to identify and report genre features did not enable them to produce a text in the requested genre” (2010: 21–22).

Other research has shown that students’ prior genre knowledge is so ingrained that they are unable to adapt this knowledge to new genres and situations. In their study on “Teaching and Learning a Multimodal Genre in a Psychology Course,” Chris Anson, Deanna Dannels, and Karen St. Clair (2005) discovered that the tacit, prior genre knowledge that students bring to a new assignment may make it difficult to get outside the framework of traditional, single mode genres, thus negatively affecting performance of new multimodal genres. This finding is supported by a cross-institutional study carried out by Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi (2011), who found that some students acted as “boundary-guarders,” holding tightly to

their prior knowledge of genre, and were unwilling to adapt that knowledge to new writing situations. On the other hand, “boundary-crossers” were students who were more likely to repurpose their genre knowledge and adapt it to new writing situations.

This interest in how prior genre knowledge can cue students’ writing performances in new situations and can both limit and enable effective learning transfer has been pursued in a recent study by Rebecca Nowacek (2011) – a classroom-based ethnography focused on an interdisciplinary writing community (linked courses in history, literature, and religious studies). Nowacek found that spoken and written genres “offer exigencies and constraints for students trying to make connections and teachers trying to facilitate connections” (2011: 18). Genre knowledge can motivate connections, as in the case of a student who successfully drew on his previous knowledge (of research papers and analysis essays) to create a hybrid genre that synthesized the rhetorical goals of research and analysis to effectively respond to an assignment. On the other hand, genre knowledge can limit effective learning transfer, as in the case of a student who drew on her knowledge of personal diaries to respond to a history assignment that conceptualized the diary as more of a detailed log; in this case the student’s genre knowledge cued acts of transfer that were counterproductive to the objectives of the assignment.

Coinciding with an interest in how genre functions as a resource “that helps individuals both to generate ... and to interpret” meaning (2011: 19), Nowacek is interested in students’ roles as rhetorical actors and their identities as “agents of integration” who not only adapt previous knowledge to new situations but also reshape, reuse, and repurpose writing knowledge. In her study of writing assignments across the disciplines, Mary Soliday (2011) examined how students enact the role of “agents of integration” as they struggle to adapt their stance within academic genres and to achieve authority, a struggle that lies at the core of the successful acquisition of writing skills. This focus on the identity and agency of the student learner is further explored in studies such as Christine Tardy’s longitudinal research study of the development of genre knowledge of four multilingual graduate students in engineering and computer sciences (*Building Genre Knowledge* 2009). When Chatri, a native of Thailand and a second-year doctoral student in Electrical and Computer Engineering, was asked to participate in the genres of the profession and to review a manuscript, he took on a new position of agency and “position of power within the genre system” (2009: 257), transforming his sense of identity within the research community. In addition, Yoshi, a Japanese student, struggled with adopting a confident and assertive tone in a cover letter, noting that this U.S. style discourse would be considered arrogant and rhetorically ineffective in his country. All four international students described tensions they felt between their cultural identities and discursive identities. However, as Tardy notes, the writer’s negotiation of these tensions is “central to understanding individual writing development” (2009: 276). In her study of the genre learning of multilingual writ-

ers, Tardy observes, “Writers have unique cultural profiles and perspectives, linguistic backgrounds, educational experiences, geopolitical contexts, and so on, all relevant to genre learning” (2009: 275). The next section will focus on research that explores genre learning as socially situated and culturally mediated.

3 Socio-cultural approaches to academic genres and writing

Some studies have found that socio-economic class level can play a significant role in the development of genre knowledge. Based on her investigation of the influence of sociocultural background on the genre acquisition of British school children and examination of a large corpus of essays written in response to national tests and representing varied age levels and sociocultural groups, Debra Myhill (2005) found that young writers draw on their prior knowledge of the narrative genre, based on broad cultural experiences of narrative. However, they struggled more with genres for which they had no prior sociocultural knowledge. In addition, Myhill found that middle-class children are better positioned for acculturation to academic genres. This finding is supported by the research done by Alina Spinello and Chris Pratt (2005), who studied two groups of Brazilian elementary school children – one group of middle-class and one group of working class students – and found that middle-class children were able to identify and produce genres (particularly stories and letters) more successfully than working class students. Middle class students were aware of the linguistic conventions and formal structures of stories and letters and displayed more of a “meta-textual awareness” or genre knowledge.

Further exploring the ways in which genre performances are culturally mediated, Rochelle Kapp and Bongsi Bangeni (2005) conducted a case study of black, working class, first-generation college students at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Through their immersion in reading and writing genres of social sciences and learning of formal features alongside the form of the academic conversation, students did gain knowledge of genre conventions; however, this knowledge did not translate to performance. They concluded, “Through an exploration of its strengths and weaknesses, we argue that while a genre approach is a key resource for providing metaknowledge of the discourse conventions, it does not provide the necessary exploratory talking and writing space to enable students from outside the dominant discourses to become critical participants” (2005: 111).

However, other studies have found that genres, as “flexible forms of language functioning in socially situated practices” (Cristovao 2009: 13) can be culturally empowering, particularly for lower-level students. Vera Lúcia Lopes Cristovão studied 4th and 5th graders in Brazil who received genre instruction as they wrote in multiple genres – memories, opinions, and poems. She analyzed 230 memory texts (on the topic “The Place Where I Live”) and observed how the students’ genres

based on memories were “anchored in situated socio-historical settings” (2009: 23) and enabled them to critically reflect on where they lived. She also observed students as they were led through a “didactic sequence” that first defines the features of the genre, then provides examples of genres, then asks students to read, analyze and finally produce the genre. She found that this approach to genre, based in critical analysis and production, can empower students, “providing contact with their cultural anchorage and respect to their socio-cultural settings” (2009: 23). Overall, while recent studies of genre in academic settings have made cultural background a significant variable, further research is needed on the dynamic cultural and sociohistorical conditions that shape students’ genre knowledge and performance.

4 Cognitive research on professional genres and writing

Coinciding with the body of empirical research on genre in academic contexts are multiple research studies that investigate professional and workplace genres. Similar to the interest in how novice writers gain access to academic discourse and learn new genres, a rich body of research has examined how novices learn new genres in the workplace and use those genres to carry out the social goals of the organization. This section will focus on how genre knowledge develops in the workplace, how this communal knowledge is used to carry out common goals and actions, and how these genres function ideologically, both constraining and enabling the social actions of participants in professional organizations.

4.1 The development of genre knowledge in the workplace

In her chapter from *Writing in the Real World*, “Learning New Genres: The Convergence of Knowledge and Action” (1999), Anne Beaufort carried out an ethnographic study of three writers at a Job Resource Center, a non-profit organization, analyzing the genre of the press release, letter of request, and grant proposal. All three workers illustrated that, even though they were immersed in the discourse community, they still had to learn conventions of the genres and truly understand the goals of the community (and also practice and receive help from superiors) before mastering their workplace’s new genres. Beaufort found that the optimal conditions for genre learning and acquisition involve both immersion in the context and coaching. She also found that content and procedural knowledge worked together, that depth of genre knowledge grew over time, and that genre knowledge was based on participation in the community. These findings are supported by a more recent study of how novices are initiated into NIH grant writing via both cognitive and

social apprenticeships (Ding 2008). Learning the genre of grant writing relies on both cognitive apprenticeship approaches – such as modeling, scaffolding, coaching, and collaboration – as well as social apprenticeship approaches, such as socialization, interaction, and collaboration with experts, colleagues, and peers in informal settings to acquire disciplinary knowledge and experiences.

The role of genres in reflecting and reinforcing communal knowledge and generating new knowledge has led to a number of research studies focused on how genre knowledge within academic contexts transfers to workplace settings, with several studies focused on novice writers' "cognitive apprenticeship" and initiation into the professional organization via professional internships. In their study of the transition from academic to professional writing, "Write Where You Are: Situating Learning to Write in the University and Workplace Settings," Aviva Freedman and Christine Adam (2000) studied the "situated learning" of genres. They observed seven master's level students involved in full-time internships organized by a Canadian University's school of public administration, in which the students spent a semester working in paid, full-time public sector jobs. They compared these to a second set of subjects – 3 students in an upper-level undergraduate course in financial analysis. Through visits to the respective classroom and workplace sites, observations, interviews, and collection of texts, they found that the goals of genre learning differed significantly and that "the guide-learner relations are different" (2000: 55). Whereas learning was the goal of academic writing, action and policy setting were the goals of workplace writing; in addition, in the workplace, roles were less static and fixed. Freedman and Adam concluded, "When students leave the university to enter the workplace, they not only need to learn new genres of discourse, they need to learn new ways to learn such genres" (2000: 56).

These new ways of learning genres for novices entering the workplace are explored by Natasha Artemeva in her study, "A Time to Speak, a Time to Act: A Rhetorical Genre Analysis of a Novice Engineer's Calculated Risk Taking." Artemeva reported on a case study of a novice engineer, Sami, and examined the features of rhetorical genre knowledge that allow a novice to be successful in challenging and changing rhetorical practices of the workplace (2006: 192). Artemeva found that, by drawing on his previous personal experiences (a family of engineers), educational experiences (in particular, an engineering communication course he had taken), along with his workplace experiences, Sami was able to draw on his previous genre knowledge of engineering in order to successfully participate in the communicative actions of an engineering firm (2006: 217).

In further research on novices/interns and the development of genre knowledge in professional settings, Graham Smart and Nicole Brown (2002) studied 25 seniors in a Professional Writing major, who were placed in a variety of settings – from high-tech companies to PR firms to non-profit organizations – and examined their ability to navigate unfamiliar genres such as training manuals, newsletters, grant proposals, advertisements, and employee handbooks. They found that the

interns' successful efforts in producing unfamiliar genres were due to their immersion in the organizational culture, their interactions with fellow employees and developing sense of professional identity, and their encounters with “mediating artifacts,” such as other discourse genres and linguistic artifacts (documents, print, and electronic texts). Smart and Brown (2002: 122) noted that the key contribution of their study is its challenge to the cognitivist concept of learning transfer and its support for an understanding of “transformation” of learning – most notably that genre performance and learning may happen simultaneously, as writers reinvent writing practices in new contexts.

5 Research on social factors affecting workplace genres and writing

The above studies of how genre knowledge develops within professional organizations focus on the importance of participation in and immersion in workplace communities and enculturation in the new professional domain. This section will focus on how genres define social roles and purposes. Catherine Schryer notes, “Although some composition researchers have brought genre theory into university classrooms, it has been empirical researchers in professional communication who have most profited from and most developed [Carolyn] Miller’s linking of genres to social contexts” (2002: 77).

5.1 Research Studies of Genre Systems in the Workplace

Various studies have focused on a “genre system” or “set of genres interacting to accomplish the work” of an organization (Devitt 1991: 340). These researchers have examined the role of genre systems in the workplace and are interested in how groups of connected genres or a range of interrelated genres comprise the complex communicative interactions of organizations, from insurance companies, to banks, to social work agencies, to engineering firms. Carol Berkenkotter, in her study, “Genre Systems at Work” (2001), examined the various genres produced in a rural mental health clinic and the ways in which the mental health reports – which circulated from writers to supervisor, to psychiatrist, to case manager, to other therapists who might work with the client in the future – coordinated the complex activity in this setting and across professional and institutional settings. One genre set focused on is the psychotherapy interview and the notes taken during the interview with the client. These therapist notes participated in a system of genres consisting of an oral session, written evaluation, initial assessment, treatment plan, progress reports, and termination summary – a genre system that coordinated the

various kinds of professional activity within the mental health clinic, maintained an institutional record, and enabled information to travel to other institutional systems (legal, medical, actuarial).

Similarly, Dorothy Winsor, in her case study of entry-level engineers, studied the genre of documentation and noted that “documentation does more than record events; it also defines them, and in doing so, it shapes the organization’s understanding of both events and of itself” (1999: 220). Winsor reported on four case studies from a nine-year study of entry-level engineers writing at work and found that the genre of documentation coordinated work and provided ways to deal with conflict and maintain consensus. One engineer, Al, became a labor relations representative for his facility, thus acting as a “mediator” between the union and management. Whether interviewing workers accused of violating work rules, responding to a filed grievance, or taking minutes during contract negotiations, Al used documentation genres to define, record, and maintain the activities of the organization and to construct social relations. Winsor concluded by noting that genre is “one of the resources that may be deployed to create relations of power and hierarchy” (1999: 222), which is the focus of the next section.

5.2 Research on the ideological effects of writing professional genres

Following genre studies like those above that have explored how groups of connected genres – or systems – have coordinated social actions and shaped professional identities, recent genre studies have also examined how genres reflect and reinforce ideologies. In her study entitled “Ordering Work: Blue-collar Literacy and the Political Nature of Genre,” Winsor (2000) explored the political nature of genre. She observed the work of three engineers and three technicians at AgriCorp, a large manufacturer of agricultural equipment and analyzed the genre of the work order, which are generic textual tools used by engineers to set the tasks for technicians. Winsor found that work orders maintained the corporate hierarchy and reinforced engineers’ vision of technicians as little more than tools that they activated through the work order, instead of as agents and participants in the social action. She concluded that “power relations and perceptions of work lead to and from perceptions of genre” but that, as a field, “we have not always paid sufficient attention to the fact ... that genre is also a form of political action” (Winsor 2000: 180).

Also exploring the relationship between genre and power, Catherine Schryer (1994) designed an ethnographic study of records within a veterinary medical context and found that the new system of record keeping mirrored the way that practitioners solved complicated medical problems and coordinated social action as other staff members later added to the records. In addition, by comparing competing genres – comparing the new system of records to the former system – Schryer was able to discern varying social purposes and values implicit in these two genres,

divergences that revealed tensions between researchers and practitioners in the college. She discovered that professional genres “deeply enact their ideology” (Schryer 1994: 122) by expressing clear power relations.

The ways in which genres reflect and perpetuate a hierarchical order can also be seen in Schryer’s case study (2002) of negative “bad news” letters within an insurance company. She found that letter writers, despite their personal discomfort with assuming a position of power, felt constrained by the genre to compose letters whose structure and linguistic strategies (nontransactive constructions, nominalizations, passive constructions, negations) reduced readers to passivity and nonresponse. In a more recent study of a different kind of letters, Schryer et al. (2009) examined how forensic letters in child abuse cases negotiated the difference between diagnosis and opinion, finding that the letters are “reifications” that constitute part of the essential documentation in child abuse cases: “In a real sense, they launch the terms of the arguments that influence if a child is taken into protective care, if caregivers are charged with a criminal offense, or if other social agencies just keep a watchful eye on a particular family” (2009: 241).

The influential role of genre in shaping interpretation and limiting and enabling social action can also be seen in Berkenkotter and Ravotas’ (1997) study of a genre of classification – the APA’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) – and how it shapes interpretation and diagnosis. The DSM-IV shapes interpretation by classifying patients into categories based on population and activity (i.e. “borderline personalities” or “survivors of sexual abuse”). The client’s narrative and local knowledge are factored out as the condition is taken up and resituated into a universal classification system based on the field-specific knowledge of medical psychiatry. A more recent study further explored this tension between a medical genre’s generalizable principles and its application to individual medical cases. Christa Teston (2009) carried out a grounded investigation of a medical genre – the Standard of Care document. The Standard of Care document is a set of national guidelines that medical experts consult in order to determine the kind of care considered standard when treating patients with cancer. After examining this genre’s role and function within the cross-disciplinary collaborations of the Tumor Board meetings – meetings that bring together oncologists, surgeons, pathologists, radiologists and primary care physicians to discuss cancer cases – Teston found that the Standard of Care principles were not always generalizable to individual cases and that the genre embodied “the tension between the expectations of the profession and the experiences of their patients” (347). She also found that this authoritative genre had “implications for how decisions get made and patient prognoses are constructed” (347), assigning it a powerful role in the medical community.

This understanding of the ideological function of genres within organizations and their ability to create and maintain subject positions has led to significant research over the past two decades that has examined how writers make strategic

choices to resist or challenge genre conventions based on their cultural positioning. In his study of social work genres, Paré (2002) examined the ways in which Inuit social workers resisted adapting to the professional identity of record keeping due to their reluctance to provide detailed records for white authorities. A recent study more fully illustrates how individuals work within constraints and resist conventions in order to produce change. Amy Proppen and Mary Lay Schuster (2010) focused on how individuals within the legal system (victims and advocates) were able to create a genre, victim impact statements (VIS), that work to disrupt and destabilize legal decision-making. Although it operates within the norms and conventions of the courtroom and is presented to the judge during his or her sentencing investigation, the VIS is not bound to the conventions of logical, factual arguments that typically comprise legal genres and can be personal, emotional, and highly individualized. Results indicated that VISs have an impact on the terms and conditions of the sentencing (for example, after reading a VIS that described a mother's death as a hardship on the surviving children, a judge added the stipulation that the defendant pay for counseling as part of his sentence), illustrating that "genre change can happen at the level of an individual genre instantiation in an individual context, while functioning within a larger collective or community" (2010: 10). The genre of the VIS functions as a tool that allows victims' voices to be heard while also allowing victims and advocates to push for systemic change.

6 Methodology

In "Investigating Texts in Their Social Contexts: The Promise and Peril of Rhetorical Genre Studies," Catherine Schryer (2011) suggests "that Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) have been making and have the capacity to make a significant contribution to writing research precisely because RGS researchers work at the interstices of various disciplines," from rhetorical genre theory, to applied linguistics, to social and sociological perspectives, to theories of learning. Indeed, genre research, as reflected in the studies described previously in this chapter, forms a rich site for interdisciplinarity, with researchers drawing on cognitive and sociological approaches and multiple methods, such as discourse analysis, ethnographic methods, and case study research. As Bazerman (1997) has argued, genre-based research that draws on multiple methods "holds much promise for drawing humanities' understandings of the workings of language into relation with the social sciences' understandings of human relations, behavior, and consciousness" (23). In this way, rhetorical genre studies can benefit not only from research studies of how genres are learned, performed, and situated, but genre analysis itself can be used as a research methodology and "can play a major role in the current investigations into the communicative grounds of social order" (23).

While genre research in RGS over the past three decades has drawn on pluralistic methodologies and has integrated multiple methods and data sources in the study of genre, we have not yet fully accounted for the range of complex factors – individual, sociohistorical, cultural, material – that inform genre knowledge and performance in academic and professional settings. Noting that “research on the learners’ side of genre-based instruction is still not prevalent” (2011: 70), Cheng calls for further genre-focused writing research and practice that explores “the unique contribution of textual explorations to building students’ awareness of the rhetorical contexts of a genre” (2011: 81). We need further empirical investigations – studies that draw on multiple methods, cross-institutional research, ethnography, etc. – to track the complex, dynamic cognitive, textual, rhetorical, and social activities involved in the situated learning of genre, further studies that can enrich our understanding of genre and its role in the writing classroom. Applications of genre research to the teaching of writing are explored in the following section.

7 Applications: genre approaches to teaching writing skills

Given the complexity of writing, genre researchers, as discussed in section 2 of this chapter, have studied the question of how students acquire or learn genres. For example, Aviva Freedman’s early research (1987) on how novice writers learn to write by immersion in the discipline or professional context of which the genre is a part leads to her claim that students have a natural ability to acquire writing skills tacitly. In her ethnographic study of students in an undergraduate class in law, Freedman found that, even without explicit instruction, students internalized practices of the discipline of legal studies. According to Freedman’s study, learners acquired a new genre by approaching the task with a “dimly felt sense” of the new genre they were attempting, a generalized sense of academic discourse that is modified based on inferences writers made from writing assignments, feedback on assignments, class discussions, lectures, and readings. Thus, according to Freedman, students acquire a new genre “in the course of writing – in the performance itself” and in “learning to write by writing” (1987: 107), making explicit methods of instruction unnecessary.

Freedman’s above study, along with her later critique of explicit approaches to teaching genre in a special issue of *Research in the Teaching of English* (1993a, 1993b), began a lively debate among scholars from various theoretical and pedagogical traditions. Her immersion model of acquisition stands in contrast to more text-based or linguistic models that focus on explicit teaching of genres, such as those advocated by specialists in Systemic Functional Linguistics or the SFL-based Sydney School of genre studies (Cope and Kalantzis 1993; Macken-Horarik 2002;

Martin 1997; Martin and Rose 2008). For instance, based on empowering those students with less access to the privileged forms of academic discourse, the Sydney School asserts the need to demystify textual and linguistic features of powerful genres, while RGS scholars are concerned with abstracting genres from their social contexts and teaching them too prescriptively. However, this debate over the role of genre in writing instruction has been mediated by those, such as John Swales, who have suggested an assimilation of views and a “more nuanced approach to genre-awareness raising and genre acquisition” (2009: 5) that combines explicit and implicit approaches.

Indeed, various studies have demonstrated the importance of both methods that facilitate tacit learning – through immersion in writing situations – and methods based on explicit instruction. In her study (based on surveys, interviews with students, observations, and audiotaped classes), Mary Soliday researched the teaching of a science course and found that the instructor “mapped out genre both implicitly and explicitly” (2005: 68), both immersing students in discussions and lectures and also explicitly articulating genre expectations in writing assignments and model texts. Similarly, Lorelei Lingard and Richard Haber, based on their observation of medical student apprenticeships, explored the tension between tacit learning and explicit teaching, concluding that “there is a role for rhetorically explicit instruction in the context of situated practice” (2002: 168). They further note that explicit teaching, when “situated and accurate,” can cultivate in students a “meta-awareness” or conscious, critical awareness of genre (and its rhetorical purposes and contextual meanings) that increases effectiveness of communication.

Further bridging explicit and tacit learning approaches, Devitt calls for the “explicit teaching of genre awareness,” an approach that would teach “a meta-awareness of genres as learning strategies, rather than static features” (2004: 197). This is supported by Beaufort’s longitudinal study (2007) of one writer’s transfer of skills across contexts of high school, college, and career and the identification of genre knowledge as one of the domains or mental schema that writers invoke as they analyze new writing tasks in new contexts – a domain that can bridge rhetorical and social knowledge. Positive transfer of learning, according to Beaufort, is facilitated by teaching genres as learning strategies that can provide students with tools that transfer to multiple contexts. With this in mind, she recommends metacognitive activities that teach genre awareness, such as asking students to compare the rhetorical strategies of texts on the same topic but in two different genres or having students collect multiple examples of a genre, followed by analyzing the genre, producing the genre, and writing a “how to” guide for writing in that genre. By having students analyze the relationship between genre and situation, reflect on how genres work within communities and on their ideological effects, and draw on and repurpose prior genre knowledge to produce genres, a genre-based pedagogy can help students understand and write in various situations and contexts. Most genre approaches in the classroom, then, focus on a two-fold approach to 1. teach-

ing genre analysis as a way of gaining access to unfamiliar writing situations and 2. teaching critical genre awareness, which encourages students to transfer genre knowledge to new contexts for writing. Examples of these approaches will be described further below.

7.1 Teaching Genre Analysis

In the RGS approach to teaching genre analysis, students learn how to use genre analysis to gain access to new or unfamiliar writing situations. This genre-based pedagogy, more fully articulated in the textbook *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres* (2004), leads students through the following steps: 1. collecting samples of the genre and observing the scene or context in which the genre functions; 2. identifying the setting, subject, participants and purposes of the genre; 3. describing the genre's features; and 4. analyzing what the features reveal about the situation in which the genre is used. To prompt this analysis, students consider questions such as, "What do these rhetorical patterns reveal about the genre, its situation, and the scene in which it is used? Why are these patterns significant? What can you learn about the actions being performed through the genre by observing its language patterns?" (Devitt, Reiff and Bawarshi: 94). Students learn how to connect rhetorical features to social practices and gain a socio-rhetorical awareness and agility that will enable them more critically and effectively to map, negotiate, and participate in various situations within and beyond the academy.

Other approaches to teaching genre analysis include Cathy Fleischer's and Sarah Andrew-Vaughan's "unfamiliar genre project" assignment. In *Writing Outside Your Comfort Zone: Helping Students Navigate Unfamiliar Genres*, they describe a genre-based curricular approach that asks students to explore an unfamiliar genre by following these steps: 1. reading and collecting samples of the genre and keeping a research journal; 2. writing a how-to guide on writing the genre; 3. creating an annotated bibliography of model samples of the genre; 4. producing the genre; 5. writing a reflective letter on the experience; and 6. sharing the work with a parent or guardian or other interested person who will respond to the work. Students chose genres such as political pamphlets, sports columns, movie reviews, and parodies, and according to Fleischer and Andrew-Vaughan, "researching their genre helps students gain confidence that they can take on new writing tasks" (2009: 116) and helps them experience "what it means to write something that is outside their comfort zones" (2009: 160).

While genre analysis continues to be a feature of many writing textbooks focused on academic discourse (argument and analysis), recent texts have featured analysis of public and new media genres. Brock Dethier's *21 Genres and How to Write Them* (2013) features a series of rhetorical or process-based "moves" for writing particular genres, from Wikis, to blogs, to emails. Followed by an analysis of

the genre's purpose, audience, and context, Dethier includes a series of questions that ask writers to consider the typical content of the text, its length, how it is arranged, what words stand out, the tone – to unpack the rhetorical moves choreographed by the genre. Similarly, Kathryn Evans' *Real Questions: Reading and Writing Genres* (2013) features, in addition to academic genres, genres such as opinion editorials, blog posts, brochures, and public service ads. Each chapter focuses on analysis of the genre's purpose, audience, organization, focus, development, language, and design. While these approaches enable students to gain knowledge of genres (and access to the situations within which they participate), it is also crucial that students are able to make critically informed decisions within these writing situations. This critical awareness of genre is the focus of the next section.

7.2 Teaching Critical Awareness of Genre

In "Teaching Critical Genre Awareness," Devitt shares an approach that combines explicit teaching of particular genres, the teaching of antecedent genres, and the teaching of critical genre awareness, with the goal of cultivating transfer of writing knowledge to other situations. With the end goal being "a critical consciousness of genre," Devitt leads students through the following sequence of assignments: 1. analyzing a familiar genre; 2. writing the familiar genre differently; 3. analyzing a genre from another culture or time; 4. analyzing an academic genre; 5. writing that academic genre; 6. critiquing the genre and recommending changes; and 7. rewriting the genre (2009: 349). This sequence encourages students to mediate between familiar and unfamiliar genres – and between analysis and production of genres – in order to cultivate an awareness of how contexts shape generic responses.

Beaufort also recommends a series of scaffolded assignments and related exercises that work to cultivate metacognition and meta-awareness of genre. These assignments ask students to analyze the relationship between genre and situation, to explore how genres work within communities, to reflect on their ideological effects, and to draw on and repurpose prior genre knowledge to produce genres – with the purpose of helping students how to understand and write in various situations and contexts. In unit 1, students write a literacy autobiography and study the genre features of the autobiographical essay. In unit 2, students carry out a genre analysis, whereby "having students look at texts in terms of genres and how they are written allows them to build more transferable skills to carry into other writing environments" (2007: 194). Finally, in unit 3, students conduct an ethnography of a discourse community, which includes collecting textual artifacts and analyzing genres of the community. Reflecting on her proposed curriculum, Beaufort states, "Generally I begin with the concept of genres, and then, after students have read, discussed, written in several genres and we have talked about the nature of each, I bridge to the discourse communities students know and participate in" (2007:

178). These meta-discussions and assignments are interwoven with various activities for teaching genre awareness: having students list and describe 10 genres they regularly read and write, having students compare the treatment of the same subject in two different genres, or having students collect samples of everyday genres such as obituaries, postcards, or wedding announcements and analyze the values and social actions reflected in their features.

The pedagogical applications above emphasize multiple approaches, both implicit and explicit, to immersing students in reading and writing genres, providing opportunities for metacognitive reflection as well as opportunities for feedback. They also draw on explicit teaching as students read model genres, analyze generic features and move from description of these features to production of the genre. While all of these approaches are distinctive, they promote multiple, overlapping methods that develop cognitive abilities related to genre awareness, that teach acquisition of linguistic or text-based strategies, and that demonstrate how cognitive and textual knowledge of genres are shaped by the sociocultural context.

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