

COMMUNICATION AND COGNITION 2011
MANIPULATION, PERSUASION AND DECEPTION IN
LANGUAGE

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JANUARY 26-28 2011
UNIVERSITY OF NEUCHÂTEL, SWITZERLAND

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
RÉSUMÉS



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Conference programme

8:00-9:00	Registration and coffee / Inscription et café	Wednesday, January 26 th / Mercredi 26 janvier
9:00-9:30	Opening addresses by the organizers and the Dean of the Faculty / Message de bienvenue des organisateurs et du Doyen de la Faculté	
9:30-10:30	Keynote lecture / Conférence invitée Dan SPERBER (Institut Jean Nicod, EHESS-ENS-CNRS, Paris) <i>Epistemic vigilance in cognition, communication and society</i>	
10:30-11:00	Coffee / Café	
11:00-11:30	Francesca ERVAS (Institut Jean Nicod, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris) <i>Lying by telling the truth. Irony/lie distinction in autism spectrum disorders</i>	
11:30-12:00	Anna KUZIO (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan) <i>Framing Effects- an analysis based on a Cognitive-Affective Model</i>	
12:00-12:30	Evgénia PAPAROUNI (Université Libre de Bruxelles) <i>A case for emotion awareness</i>	
12:30-14:00	Lunch / Repas	
14:00-14:30	Didier MAILLAT (Université de Fribourg) <i>Manipulating context selection : On the pragmatic inevitability of manipulation</i>	
14:30-15:00	Louis de SAUSSURE (Université de Neuchâtel) <i>Bypassing controls of relevance-threshold: Presuppositional cognitive biases</i>	
15:00-15:30	Chris HART (University of Hertfordshire) <i>Activating the cheater-detection module in argumentation: Where communication meets cognition</i>	
15:30-16:00	Regina BLASS (Africa International University) <i>Persuasion through strengthening in argumentation: Example from German discourse</i>	
16:00-16:30	Coffee / Café	
16:30-17:00	Amélie GOURDON (University of Birmingham) & Sarah BECK (University of Birmingham) <i>Overcoming the framing effect when making decisions based on verbal probabilities</i>	
17:00-17:30	Kourken MICHAELIAN (Institut Jean Nicod, ENS, Paris) <i>The information effect: Constructive memory, testimony, and epistemic luck</i>	
17:30-18:30	Keynote lecture / Conférence invitée Pascal ENGEL (Université de Genève) <i>A natural history of foolishness</i>	
19:00	Welcome drink / Apéritif de bienvenue	

Conference programme

9:00-10:00	Keynote lecture / Conférence invitée Frans van EEMEREN (University of Amsterdam) <i>Fallacies as derailments of argumentative discourse. Acceptance based on understanding and critical assessment</i>	Thursday, January 27 th / Jeudi 27 janvier
10:00-10:30	Marcin LEWINSKI (New University of Lisbon) & Steve OSWALD (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam) <i>When and how do we deal with straw men?</i>	
10:30-11:00	Coffee / Café	
11:00-11:30	Vasco CORREIA (New University of Lisbon) <i>Cognitive biases and argumentation: the normative dimension of persuasion</i>	
11:30-12:00	Fabrizio MACAGNO (New University of Lisbon) <i>Presupposing redefinitions: Implicit strategies for persuasively defining</i>	
12:00-12:30	Sara GRECO-MORASSO (University College London) & Carlo MORASSO (University College London) <i>Argumentation from expert opinion in media-based scientific debate</i>	
12:30-14:00	Lunch / Repas	
14:00-14:30	Emmanuelle DANBLON (Université Libre de Bruxelles) <i>La rhétorique: À la recherche d'un paradigme perdu</i>	
14:30-15:00	Thierry HERMAN (Université de Neuchâtel) <i>Les frontières de l'ad verecundiam : l'autorité par l'évidence</i>	
15:00-15:30	Mathilde PINSON (Paris 3) <i>How persuasive communication strategies have influenced the evolution of two English clausal connectors</i>	
15:30-16:00	Agatha FILIMON (Università della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano) <i>The persuasiveness of two-sided messages in corporate reporting discourse</i>	
16:00-16:30	Coffee / Café	
16:30-17:00	Fabio PAGLIERI (Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione, CNR Roma) <i>Argumentative decisions: the role of costs and benefits in persuasive argumentation</i>	
17:00-18:00	Keynote lecture / Conférence invitée Marc ANGENOT (McGill University, Montreal) <i>La notion d'arsenal argumentatif. L'inventivité rhétorique dans l'histoire</i>	
19:00	Conference dinner / Repas de conférence	

Conference programme

9:00-10:00	Keynote lecture / Conférence invitée Miriam METZGER (University of California Santa Barbara) <i>Credibility and trust of information in online environments: The use of cognitive heuristics</i>	Friday, January 28th / Vendredi 28 janvier
10:00-10:30	Hugo MERCIER (University of Pennsylvania) & Guillaume DEZECACHE (Institut Jean Nicod, ENS, Paris) <i>Communication and emotion: An evolutionary approach</i>	
10:30-11:00	Dieter THOMA (University of Mannheim) & Pavla MARTÁKOVÁ (University of Mannheim) <i>Effects of linguistic framing on investment decisions: An experimental study</i>	
11:00-11:30	Coffee / Café	
11:30-12:00	Marie JUANCHICH (Kingston University London), Karl TEIGEN (University of Oslo) & Amélie GOURDON (University of Birmingham) <i>Effect of internal and external uncertainties in judgments and decision making</i>	
12:00-12:30	Paul SARAZIN (Lancaster University) <i>The relationship between meaning construction and critique: I understand what Habermas means when he talks about "Wahrheit".</i>	
12:30-13:00	Martha SHIRO (Universidad Central de Venezuela) & Rosa MONTES (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla) <i>Verbal confrontation in Spanish speaking children's interaction</i>	
13:00-13:30	Closing address / Message de clôture	
13:30	Farewell buffet / Repas de clôture	

KEYNOTE LECTURES

26 January 2011
09:30-10:30

Dan SPERBER (Institut Jean Nicod, EHESS-ENS-CNRS, Paris)
Epistemic vigilance in cognition, communication and society

26 January 2011
17:30-18:30

Pascal ENGEL (Université de Genève)
A natural history of foolishness

27 January 2011
09:00-10:00

Frans van EEMEREN (ILIAS and University of Amsterdam)
Fallacies as derailments of argumentative discourse.
Acceptance based on understanding and critical assessment

27 January 2011
17:00-18:00

Marc ANGENOT (McGill University, Montreal)
La notion d'arsenal argumentatif. L'inventivité rhétorique dans l'histoire

28 January 2011
09:00-10:00

Miriam METZGER (University of California Santa Barbara)
Credibility and trust of information in online environments:
The use of cognitive heuristics

WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2011

KEYNOTE LECTURE

EPISTEMIC VIGILANCE IN COGNITION, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETY

Dan SPERBER (Institut Jean Nicod, EHESS-ENS-CNRS, Paris)

Humans massively depend on information provided by others and thereby incur the risk of being accidentally misinformed or, more importantly, intentionally deceived and manipulated. Sperber et al 2010 ("Epistemic Vigilance" in *Mind & Language*, 25 (4), 359–393) argue that, in order to minimise this risk, humans appeal to a variety of mechanisms of epistemic vigilance some of which attend to the reliability of sources of information (whom to believe?), others to informational contents (what to believe?). In this talk, I will outline some of the implications of this proposal for our understanding of communication.

LYING BY TELLING THE TRUTH. IRONY/LIE DISTINCTION IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Francesca ERVAS (Institut Jean Nicod, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris)

Both social and communication impairments are part of the essential diagnostic criteria used to define autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Asperger Syndrome (AS) and High-functioning autism (HFA) are widely acknowledged to be variants of this spectrum, which share such impairments but are characterized by the absence of mental retardation. In this study, I address the problem of irony and lie comprehension in individuals with ASD, which has been regarded as a consequence of the inability to recognize speaker's intention (Happè 1994) and go beyond the decoded sentence meaning of an utterance (Happè, 1993). This difficulty has also been linked to their inability in using contextual information in on-line comprehension of others' behavior (Frith 1991). Despite HFA/AS ability to pass second-order false belief task and to provide correct mental state answers, they failed in giving a contextually-appropriate mental state answers (Jolliffe-Baron-Cohen 1999).

On the one hand, both irony comprehension and lie detection involve the ability to assess communicated information as true or false (an epistemic component) and the ability to recognize an utterance as intentionally false (a mind-reading component). On the other hand, irony is different from lie because the intentionally false utterance is used to communicate something the speaker considers as true. Moreover, irony comprehension requires the ability to understand that the intentionally false utterance is pronounced by the speaker to display her epistemic status, while lie detection requires the ability to understand that the intentionally false utterance is pronounced by the speaker to conceal her epistemic status (Wilson 2009). In the case of irony, the speaker knows that the listener knows the truth, and thus does not intend to deceive, whereas the liar believes that the listener does not know the truth, and thus intends to deceive.

Previous studies investigated irony/lie distinction in normal subjects (Leekam 1988; Winner and Leekam 1991), but not much research has been done on irony/lie distinction in adult ASD individuals. Previous studies considered ironic jokes/lie distinction in autistic children and showed that autistic children with high verbal mental age can use second-order reasoning and can make appropriate social judgments about lies and jokes. Yet, even if they seem to be able to distinguish lies from jokes, observational data on these children, suggest that their competence on the comprehension of these hypothetical situations was not matched by an ability to use lying and joking in real life. These results indicate that even those autistic children who understand the distinction between jokes and lies in theory, may not be effective at joking and lying in everyday life (Leekam 1994).

It has been argued that a fully-fledged capacity to be vigilant towards lying should have three aspects: 1) a moral/affective aspect involved in attending to malevolence, 2) an epistemic aspect involved in attending to falsity; 3) a mindreading aspect involved in attending to the liar's intention to deceive (Mascaro-Sperber 2009). The present study investigate how these aspects interact in irony/lie distinction in a group of HFA/AS adults (N=15) and a comparison group of normal subjects (N=20) by using a series of verbally presented stories containing either a lie or an ironic remark. Participants are asked to judge whether the speaker is lying or ironising and to

provide a justification for their answers. Preliminary data show that HFA/AS individuals perform as well as normal subjects in the epistemic aspect of the task, but worse than normal subjects in the mindreading aspect. Interestingly, their justification of responses shows subtle differences in their judgments of irony and lie as regard to speakers' moral/affective reasons.

FRAMING EFFECTS- AN ANALYSIS BASED ON A COGNITIVE-AFFECTIVE MODEL

Anna KUZIO (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan)

In presenting policy matters, the mass media offer more than “just the facts.” They also invoke frames that induce readers and viewers to comprehend particular policy controversies in a certain way. The past decade has seen a sudden increase in research on how frames form public opinion (cf. Lewis 2001, Brewer 2008). The key premise of this literature is that particular frames will, by emphasizing certain aspects of an event or policy, guide audience members’ thoughts and feelings about that event or matter in predictable ways, to expected conclusions (cf. Entman 1993). Indeed, significant evidence indicates that citizens’ views are shaped by partisan frames distributed through the media and by the frames that journalists employ to tell stories. Much of the research on framing effects has concentrated on finding out if such effects exist. On the other hand, some studies have also focussed on psychological processes that underlie framing, thereby offering a broader understanding of framing effects (cf. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997; Price and Tewksbury 1997; Chong and Druckman 2007).

The current study exploits these efforts in \working out a theoretical account of framing effects. In particular, it employs cognitive response theories of persuasion and cognitive appraisal theories of emotion and the model of psychological processes that manage the effects of media frames on public opinion. This model suggests that various frames—in conjunction with individual receivers’ predispositions—can evoke different patterns of cognitive as well as emotional responses. Predispositions, cognitive responses, and affective responses can form the effects of frames on policy opinions. The model implies that citizens may counter-argue information in frames that defies their prior beliefs and that such counter-arguing can help give explanation not only to the restrictions of framing effects but also the emergence of “boomerang” effects in response to frames. Correspondingly, the model suggests that emotional responses to framing can constrain or enhance framing effects. The model appears to imply that audiences can play an active role in the framing process.

EMOTION AS REASON: A CASE FOR EMOTION AWARENESS

Evgénia PAPAOUNI (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the question whether there is a boundary for an unreasonable (or dysfunctional, or unethical) appeal to emotion. Findings of experimental psychology show that emotion, far from being a noise in a vacuum of cognition, interacts with cognition, at “low” and “high” levels in the construction of meaning. Such findings allow for a revisiting of the notions of bias. On the other side, experience and literature insist on situations where people and peoples have been driven astray by skilful communicators, in a way that they realise it themselves, with the benefit of time and hindsight. Beliefs and desires coexist in a multiple set of phenomena such as wishful thinking, self deception, autosuggestion, stereotyping, and, indeed, in expression of preferences according to values which may lead to self abnegation and sacrifice. An option made by a long philosophical tradition of dualism and, in some cases, by argumentation studies, was to radically proscribe the use of emotion as fallacious. On the opposite side, rhetoric has been devoted to the study of the use of pathos, right from the outset.

Emotions can be reasons to act and can be expressed in a propositional form which makes them objects of study. They are subjective and situational, a fact which presents us with methodological constraints, to be met by case studies from a multidisciplinary perspective. Such an approach is leading to a Topic of Emotions deepening the one proposed by Aristotle. Such a Topic may acquire a predictive character, for example, linking fear with risk aversion and conservative choice. Taking into account each time the specific audience we can underline the need for “emotion awareness” to complete “epistemic vigilance”. In this sense, manipulation could be defined as an appeal to the unconscious, non- “adult” part of personality, through means lacking balance among logos, ethos and pathos.

MANIPULATING CONTEXT SELECTION: ON THE PRAGMATIC INEVITABILITY OF MANIPULATION

Didier MAILLAT (Université de Fribourg)

In this paper, we propose a new take on manipulation that focuses on the hearer's cognitive processing of manipulative utterances, thereby avoiding some of the descriptive and explanatory limitations of other approaches to manipulation (see Saussure and Schultz 2005 for discussion).

Taking a relevance-theoretic perspective on utterance interpretation, we will follow Sperber & Wilson (1995) and posit that interpretation is a context building process through which contextual assumptions are incrementally added to an interpretative context subset. According to Sperber & Wilson (1995), this incremental process obeys the two principles of maximisation of effects and minimisation of effort which will in turn determine an order of accessibility for the various contextual assumptions that could potentially enter the interpretative context of a given utterance.

The main argument in this paper presents an analytic model that captures the specificity of manipulative strategies as attempts to exploit the inherent limitations of context selection processes as they have been described above. Specifically, manipulation will be shown to be best accounted for as a form of communication that tries to interfere with the order of accessibility of contextual assumptions to ensure that the hearer's interpretation of a manipulative utterance only accesses a sub-optimal set of contextual assumption, crucially preventing her from accessing a dissonant, although optimal, set (see Maillat & Oswald 2009).

The pragmatics of such interpretative biases, it will be argued, is best accounted for within a relevance-theoretic framework, as the model does not assume any exhaustivity, nor absolute optimality for the process, on the contrary posits that the cognitive mechanisms which govern interpretation are error-prone as a result of our 'cognitive optimism' (Sperber, Cara, & Girotto 1995; Sperber, Clément, Heintz, Mascaro, Mercier, Origgi and Wilson 2010). In other words, interpretative inferences may be cognitively biased. It will be shown that well-known manipulative strategies exploit this very cognitive flaw.

Finally, we will conclude by showing that such an alternative, hearer-based, cognitively grounded model of manipulation achieves better predictive results than competing models while lending itself to experimental testing.

BYPASSING CONTROLS OF RELEVANCE-THRESHOLD: PRESUPPOSITIONAL COGNITIVE BIASES

Louis de SAUSSURE (Université de Neuchâtel)

The purpose of this talk is to interpret a number of cognitive biases documented in the literature (see Pohl 2004 for a selected review) as triggering inaccuracies in the process of attributing relevance to information conveyed by presuppositions. Our research relates to the work by Maillat & Oswald (2009) and anchors on Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1995) and some of its developments in the field of belief acquisition, notably the notion of epistemic vigilance detailed in Sperber & al. (2010).

Relevance is roughly understood as a ratio between the load of effort that an addressee has to consent to when working out the full-fledged meaning of a communicative intention and the amount of cognitive effects, that is, of inferential consequences, obtained in understanding. Utterances can be judged irrelevant in that they convey little or no information while requiring processing effort. They can be optimally relevant when the inferential effects obtained compensates for the processing effort they require. That an utterance or, as we argue, a piece of information extracted from an utterance, is judged relevant is thus a matter of threshold (Maillat & Oswald 2009). The ordinary situation in human communication is assumed by Relevance theory to be optimal relevance, since addressees normally presume optimal relevance. However, certain assumptions can prevent addressees from seeking optimal relevance in the utterances they are invited to process. Such assumptions are typically assumptions either about the topic (in which the addressee is not interested, and then processing triggers feelings of bore and reluctance to listen) or about the speaker herself. If the speaker is considered incompetent, the presumption of relevance is expected to lower and the cognitive motivation for processing diminishes. More interestingly, if the speaker is considered malevolent or manipulative, the addressee is expected to activate a critical filter that tracks hidden intentions, which enhances her epistemic vigilance, with the consequence of controlling her attribution of relevance to the communicated contents more cautiously. Yet if the addressee doesn't have any specific pre-existing assumptions of that sort about the speaker, and if there is no other reason to be cautious with the information communicated, the typical strategy adopted in information processing is cognitive optimism (Sperber & al.1995). It is striking, however, that although many indicators should lead the addressee to be suspicious about the communicated contents, she often might end up failing to identify them. As well-known, this typically happens with presupposed contents.

Ducrot (1972) posited a pragmatic law (*loi d'enchaînement*) relative to presuppositions: except with and or if-connectives, a connection established between utterances P and Q (either by a conjunction or by implicature) cannot be about presupposed information. A classical example is the oddness of a utterance like John doesn't take caviar at breakfast *since he liked it or of responses of the type *on the contrary, he didn't like it (except in metalinguistic interpretations). A traditional and sound explanation is that presuppositions are allegedly already admitted in the common ground (Stalnaker 1978, but see also Merin 2003). This well-known pragmatic feature of presuppositions entails that their contents are evaluated neither in depth nor critically, unless strong evidence that they should is supplied. A way to put this in Relevance-theoretic terms is to say that presuppositions are interpreted through shallow processing routines; hence they are automatically attributed relevance, except when a strong counter-assumption is present in the

context. However it is also well-known that i) presuppositions are only presented as common ground (they may not be such), and ii) presuppositions, as manifest assumptions, do actually enter inferential paths and heuristics.

Not losing time and effort on common knowledge, or on already stabilized knowledge, is an expected feature of cognition if cognition is geared to maximisation of relevance. Thus the abovementioned pragmatic properties of presupposition processing make them a very successful heuristics in usual settings of communication. Yet, expectedly, they form a critical gap for the evaluation of the information they embed when the inferential task they are involved in concerns non-communicative goals or when they are intentionally supplied in order to have a better chance of bypassing the addressee's critical evaluation.

A number of biases known in the literature are directly related to presupposition, as far as their wording in experimental settings is concerned. Literature in psychology has identified many biases without noticing how much they have to do with the pragmatic features of presupposition. Among them, we will discuss some of the biases presented in Pohl (2004).

Framing biases (Tversky & Kahneman 1974) are an example, to the extent that elements providing framing information can be interpreted as presuppositions (hence, again, they are attributed automatic relevance). In the classical example by Tversky & Kahneman, where the question asked is Is the percentage of African nations in the UN smaller or larger than 10%?, we suggest that the question induces a presupposition giving relevance to the figure 10%, namely that the expected number is around 10 percent (we will provide arguments against a view for which these are implicatures). Other framing cases will be discussed in the same light. Quite similarly, the Moses illusion (Reder & Kusbit 1991) relies on a presupposition; labelling effects (Loftus & Palmer 1974) and misinformation effects (Loftus, Miller & Burns 1978) associated with words presuppose encyclopaedic information or trigger existential presuppositions (typically with definite descriptions). Even the confirmation bias may be explored along related lines: the confirmation of pre-existing information is cognitively more acceptable than contradiction since once stabilized in a belief system, it shares properties with presupposed information, although not on the level of 'common ground' (which raises the issue whether Stalnaker's assumption should be extended to pre-existing information not limited to 'common ground').

Besides interpreting experimental designs demonstrating the existence of these biases in cognition as presupposition-triggers, we will also briefly examine a real-world situation, the recent voting in Switzerland against minarets, in the light of presuppositions and, more generally, their relevance in the cognitive system, considering that presuppositions are highly relevant and thus more likely to bypass epistemic vigilance devices.

ACTIVATING THE CHEATER-DETECTION MODULE IN ARGUMENTATION: WHERE
COMMUNICATION MEETS COGNITION
Chris HART (University of Hertfordshire)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) highlights the role of discourse in reproducing xenophobic attitudes and thus legitimising discriminatory actions. A number of important argumentation strategies have been identified (Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak 2001). What is missing in CDA, however, is a cognitive-evolutionary explanation as to the impact of strategic discourse (cf. Chilton 2004, 2005; Hart 2005, 2010). In this paper I present an analysis of eight particular topoi in immigration discourse and seek to explain their cognitive impact in terms of Evolutionary Psychology.

Evolutionary Psychology views the mind as a mass of functionally specific modules adapted to the problems presented by an ancestral environment but which remain in modern cognition to be activated by representations predicating equivalent problems (Cosmides and Tooby 1997; Pinker 1997). One significant problem presented by group-living would have been individuals who renege on the so-called 'social contract' (Cosmides and Tooby 1992). That is, those who reap the rewards of group-living but fail to contribute to group effectiveness. Cosmides and Tooby propose that a 'cheater-detection' module would have evolved in response to this 'freerider' problem. The cheater-detection module is automatically alerted in social contract situations and if 'cheating' is found promotes particular decision-rules regarding future actions.

In immigration discourse, several topoi are recurrent which, either independently or via intertextual interaction, predicate that immigrants and asylum seekers are 'social cheats'. The impact of these topoi (and their interaction) might therefore be explained in terms of activations of the cheater-detection module and resultant decision-rules adaptive in the ancestral environment but counter-conducive to social inclusion in the modern world.

On this account, topoi in discourse can 'tap into' decision-rules to provide the antecedent that triggers consequent decisions and actions. The conclusion rules in topoi might not then be arrived at through reason but may be automatic, adapted responses. In this sense, prejudice arises when communication meets cognition.

PERSUASION THROUGH STRENGTHENING IN ARGUMENTATION: EXAMPLES FROM GERMAN DISCOURSE

Regina Blass (Africa International University)

Sperber *et al.* (2010:45) claim that humans 'have a suite of cognitive mechanisms for epistemic vigilance (...) some of these mechanisms are targeted at the source of information, others at its content'. Sperber (1994) and Wilson (2000) describe three strategies of understanding: A "naively optimistic", a "cautiously optimistic" and "sophisticated understanding" strategy that detects more than accidental mishaps.

Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) introduce the notion of positive cognitive effects which they claim is the outcome of sincere communication. These cognitive effects change the addressee's cognitive environment if accepted by the addressee. They are: Contextual implications, strengthening and weakening or elimination of assumptions. Contextual implications are usually new information; strengthening can be dependent, where a series of assumptions strengthens a common conclusion, or independent which occurs through backwards confirmation. Strengthening one's own arguments can also come about through weakening or disproving the arguments of others. The effect of strengthening is more than just achieving a cognitive goal. The communicator's main intention is to make his own arguments as strong and convincing as possible, to overcome the vigilance of the addressee by portraying internal and external consistency in argumentation, so that the addressee accepts the views of the communicator and the communicative and informative intention of the addressee will be fulfilled.

In this paper I would like to introduce some strategies and linguistic means that communicators use in German discourse to strengthen their arguments and make them as persuasive and acceptable as possible to addressees.

The kinds of strengthening mechanisms that are revealed in German discourse are manifold: Testimony is often followed by conditional explanation or exemplification, which can be an instance of something quoted or indirect speech by using the subjunctive 1 (interpretive use.) Views not supported are often portrayed with creative metaphor. Apparent sharing of views are then often disproved which may be backed up with the mention of others who have the same opinion, verified often with direct or indirect speech.

The connectors used also reveal quite a bit of the strengthening mechanism. So are such particles as *etwa* and so to be found mainly in exemplification. *Schließlich* and *immerhin* signal backwards confirmation etc.

Sperber (2000) assumes that there is a "logico-rhetorical module" that allows the addressee of a persuasion or manipulation to check the message for internal and external consistency. According to this any argumentation would pass through this module to check the message and depending on acceptance or non-acceptance by the addressee will either cause the fulfilment of the communicative intention but not the informative intention or will lead to the fulfilment of both - the communicative and informative intention - which the communicator hopes for. This may create counter persuasion on the addressee's side with strengthening mechanisms which then pass the same route.

OVERCOMING THE FRAMING EFFECT WHEN MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON VERBAL
PROBABILITIES: HAVING MORE TIME IS HELPFUL BUT NOT ENOUGH
Amélie GOURDON (University of Birmingham) & Sarah BECK (University of Birmingham)

Uncertain outcomes can be described by raw probabilities (e.g., There is 40% chance), but also by verbal probabilities (e.g., There is a chance, It is not absolutely certain). Beyond their probabilistic meaning verbal probabilities also have a directionality (Teigen & Brun, 1995), i.e. can be positive or negative. The directionality gives verbal probabilities a framing effect on decisions: when presented with the likelihood that a drug for a headache will work, people typically recommend other people taking this drug more often if the likelihood was given using a positive verbal probability (e.g., some possibility) than if it was given using a negative verbal probability (e.g., quite uncertain), despite both verbal probabilities being judged by other participants as having the same probabilistic meaning (Teigen & Brun, 1999). In this study we made the first investigation into the potential differences in processing directionality and probabilistic meaning that could explain the framing effect of the directionality. We will also examine the conditions potentially favourable to this effect.

In experiment 1, nineteen participants chose between two outcomes described by verbal probabilities. In one third of the trials the probabilistic meaning was controlled and the directionality varied. In another third the directionality was controlled and the probabilistic meaning varied. In the last third, both dimensions were different, reinforcing each other (congruent trials; e.g., a positive verbal probability carrying a high probabilistic meaning) or contradicting each other (incongruent trials; e.g. a negative verbal probability carrying a high probabilistic meaning).

When both dimensions differed, participants chose more quickly between congruent verbal probabilities than between incongruent verbal probabilities. When only one dimension (directionality or probabilistic meaning) varied, participants chose more quickly between positive verbal probabilities and between pairs of high probabilistic meaning than between negative verbal probabilities and between pairs of low probabilistic meaning. Participants were also more accurate (i.e. chose the verbal probability carrying the highest probabilistic meaning most often) when choosing between congruent verbal probabilities and between positive verbal probabilities than when choosing between incongruent verbal probabilities and between negative verbal probabilities. Finally when the probabilistic meaning was held constant, participants tended to choose the outcome with the positive verbal probability more often than chance.

In experiment 2, twenty participants completed the same task under two time conditions (in counterbalanced order): in the limited time condition, they had to answer within five seconds; in the unlimited time condition, they could take as much time as they needed. We aimed here to replicate the results of experiment 1 and to investigate if the framing effect could be overcome when time pressure was removed. In both time conditions the same pattern as in experiment 1 was observed regarding accuracy and response time. However when the probabilistic meaning was held constant, we observed that the preference for the positive verbal probability was no longer observed given unlimited time.

In both experiments and both time conditions we observed a longer response time in the incongruent and low conditions, i.e. if the probabilistic meaning was contradicted by the directionality and if it was inconsistent with the task goal (find some treasure). This signals that people do not consider independently the probabilistic meaning or the directionality and suggests that the framing effect of directionality cannot be explained by people considering only the directionality. Also, even when there was no time pressure, the framing effect was seen for incongruent verbal probabilities. However if they had the same probabilistic meaning the framing effect was not observed in the unlimited time condition. Therefore having more time to choose between two verbal probabilities helps to overcome the framing effect of directionality, but this is the case only in some conditions. We conclude that the framing effect of directionality does not result only from performance costs and we will present suggestions to explore the pragmatics factors which are favourable to this framing effect.

THE INFORMATION EFFECT: CONSTRUCTIVE MEMORY, TESTIMONY, AND EPISTEMIC LUCK

Kourken MICHAELIAN (Institut Jean Nicod, ENS, Paris)

This presentation draws out some of the implications of research on deceptive communication and human deception detection for the epistemology of memory. Due to the constructive character of memory, post-event testimonial information can be incorporated, without the agent's awareness, into her memory representation of an event. The incorporation of testimonial information is responsible for the “misinformation effect”, studied especially by Loftus and her colleagues (Loftus 2005), which occurs when inaccurate testimonial information is incorporated into memory (“harmful incorporation”). The epistemic status of memory beliefs resulting from harmful incorporation is clear: they are false and therefore not knowledgeable. The interesting epistemological question arises with respect to the incorporation of accurate testimonial information (“helpful incorporation”): memory beliefs resulting from helpful incorporation are true and (normally) justified, but are they knowledgeable? One natural answer to this question is given by the “contamination view”: the incorporation (without awareness) of testimonial information prevents the resulting memory belief from qualifying as knowledge. This view is highly plausible, for beliefs resulting from helpful incorporation appear to be luckily true: since the agent is not aware that she is incorporating testimonial information, she might easily have incorporated inaccurate information and thus formed a false belief – the truth of her belief is not under control. (For a related view, see Shanton forthcoming.)

The contamination view, though plausible, leads to an unpalatable scepticism about episodic memorial knowledge: given that construction is pervasive, and given that agents constantly receive testimonial information (much of it true), helpful incorporation must be widespread; thus if incorporation is incompatible with knowledge, we will have much less episodic memorial knowledge than we ordinarily take ourselves to have – many perfectly ordinary episodic memory beliefs, despite being true, will fail to qualify as knowledge. Fortunately, we have independent reason to reject the claim that beliefs resulting from helpful incorporation are epistemically lucky and thus the contamination view itself: once we adopt an adequate (modal) conception of epistemic luck, and once we adopt an adequate (adaptive) perspective on memory, we can see that beliefs resulting from helpful incorporation are not, after all, epistemically lucky.

On Pritchard's modal conception of epistemic luck (roughly), if a belief is luckily true, then the agent forms it in the actual world but instead forms a false belief in most nearby possible worlds (Pritchard and Smith 2004). The modal conception enables us to see why helpful incorporation need not involve epistemic luck: because control, though sufficient for the absence of luck, is not necessary for it, the truth of the agent's belief might not be due to luck despite her lack of control over it; in this case, we should presumably look for the explanation of the lack of luck in the interaction between the agent and her environment, including other agents. The adaptive approach to memory focusses precisely on this agent-environment interaction. I assume that we should adopt an adaptive perspective on memory (Anderson 1990) (as well as that true belief is in general adaptive (McKay and Dennett 2009)). On the adaptive approach, construction in memory need not lead to distortion but rather should be expected in general to produce accurate memories (Sutton 2010; Michaelian forthcoming A); the adaptive approach thus suggests that the incorporation of testimonial information might be a means of producing accurate memories. And indeed recent work on deceptive communication and deception

detection suggests that this is precisely the case: though humans are “truth-biased” (Park and Levine 2001; Levine et al. 2006), i.e., disposed to accept received testimony, it appears that they are also “honesty-biased”, i.e., disposed to give true testimony (Levine et al. forthcoming; Michaelian forthcoming B). The operation of the honesty bias means that, on most occasions of honest testimony, the testifier also testifies honestly in most nearby possible worlds. And this, in turn, means that beliefs resulting from helpful incorporation are not typically epistemically lucky: in most cases, when the agent unknowingly incorporates accurate testimonial information in the actual world, she also does so in most nearby possible worlds.

Viewing incorporation as adaptive suggests that the misinformation effect is best viewed in the context of a broader “information effect”: while a negative information effect occurs when the incorporation of inaccurate information diminishes memory accuracy, a positive information effect occurs when incorporation of accurate information results in an improvement in memory accuracy. There is reason to expect the positive information effect to be more frequent and thus to hold that the information effect is, on the whole, epistemically beneficial.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

A NATURAL HISTORY OF FOOLISHNESS

Pascal ENGEL (Université de Genève)

Foolishness and stupidity are not simply, as it is often assumed, cognitive deficits. They are also the product of a systematic inappropriateness in cognitive emotions, and of an insensitivity to truth as an intellectual value and norm. Liars, bullshitters and fools have all moved away from truth, but the bullshitter and the fool have a specific problem with cognitive value.

THURSDAY, 27 JANUARY 2011

KEYNOTE LECTURE

FALLACIES AS DERAILEMENTS OF ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE. ACCEPTANCE BASED ON UNDERSTANDING AND CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Frans van EEMEREN (ILIAS and University of Amsterdam)

'Fallacies as Derailments of Argumentative Discourse' focuses on the study of argumentative discourse and the delusiveness of the fallacies. First, van Eemeren explains the meta-theoretical principles of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentative discourse. Then he discusses the critical reasonableness conception underlying the pragma-dialectical discussion procedure and the problem validity and intersubjective validity of the rules for critical discussion constituting this procedure. Next van Eemeren concentrates on the 'illocutionary perlocution' arguing/convincing and discusses how based on understanding the communicative act complex of arguing aims to bring about the interactional effect of accepting in the addressee. In the strategic maneuvering that takes place in every argumentative move aiming for effectiveness is always combined with aiming to maintain reasonableness.

According to the pragma-dialectical theory, all violations of the rules for critical discussion, which are instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits, can be characterized as fallacies. Van Eemeren makes clear how the concept of strategic maneuvering can be of help in explaining why sound and fallacious argumentative moves are sometimes hard to distinguish and in developing additional conceptual tools for identifying fallacies. The systematic incorporation of rhetorical insights in the pragma-dialectical theory makes it possible to describe more satisfactorily how fallacies "work" and can be effective. Next to context-independent criteria for judging whether a rule for critical discussion has been violated in strategic maneuvering there may also be context-dependent criteria that need to be taken into account, which vary according to communicative activity type. According to van Eemeren, fallacies can therefore not be detected by studying acceptance based on understanding and critical assessment only from a general theoretical perspective but also require considering strategic maneuvering in context.

WHEN AND HOW DO WE DEAL WITH STRAW MEN?

Marcin LEWINSKI (New University of Lisbon) & Steve OSWALD (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam)

A straw man is a fallacy of argumentative criticism in which an opponent misrepresents a proponent's standpoint or arguments in such a way that they become easier to refute, and then attacks the misrepresented position as if it were the one actually defended by the proponent. In the literature, a straw man is often described as "a common, familiar, and thoroughly theorized fallacy" (Talissee & Aikin, 2006: 349), yet both theoretical and empirical examination of the fallacy is ongoing and seems far from complete (see Bizer, Kozak & Holterman, 2009; van Laar, 2008; Lewiński, 2010; Talissee & Aikin, 2006 and Walton & Macagno, 2010 for the most recent examples).

What indeed seems to be "thoroughly theorized" is the problem of *why* a straw man is a fallacy and what varieties of a straw man can be distinguished. In dialectical approaches to argumentation, a straw man is considered to be fallacious because it leads the arguers to defend and attack different positions and thus to discuss at cross-purposes, which precludes the possibility of reaching a reasonable resolution of their initial difference of opinion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992; Walton, 1996).

Two questions – which should be answered to cater for a comprehensive study of any given fallacy –, however, remain underexplored in literature on the straw man: 1) *when* can we justifiably say that the straw man occurred? and 2) *how* can we explain its remaining covert, its persuasiveness and, in some cases, its manipulateness?

To answer both these questions, we will draw on the integrated pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation focused on the concept of strategic manoeuvring (van Eemeren & Houtlosser) and on cognitive pragmatics (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1995) because their complementarity in studying the straw man fallacy is striking. From the perspective of strategic manoeuvring, fallacies are unreasonable attempts at persuading, that is, violations of the rules of a reasonable critical discussion that may have rhetorical allure. From a cognitive pragmatic perspective, fallacies can be viewed as an arguer's attempts at imposing contextual constraints on addressees' interpretation, which characteristically lead to the exclusion of any contextual information about the fallacious nature of the argument. We will argue that both conceptions can be integrated in an account of fallaciousness that consistently combines dialectical, rhetorical and pragmatic insights.

Our argument goes as follows: the very core of any straw man attack lies in an opponent's *misrepresentation* of the position of a proponent. Therefore, in any alleged case of a straw man, an analyst has to draw the line between representation and *misrepresentation*. This task is largely context-dependent, since pragmatic conventions of interpretation, included in the pragma-dialectical model, require various contextual factors to come into play. That makes any straw man judgment a formidable task (see Jacobs, 2002: 120). Yet, we claim, it is a solvable task. Our answer to question 1) will stipulate certain general contextual conditions under which an analyst can judge a given interpretation of the protagonist's position a straw man.

Even if satisfactorily laid out, however, such conditions pertain to an analyst's evaluation based on a specific theory of argumentation. Therefore, such inquiry does not answer the question of

how ordinary addressees are misled into selecting the context that will leave the straw man unidentified. Building on a cognitive pragmatic account of manipulation (cf. Maillat & Oswald 2009, forth.), we will argue that the straw man operates as a contextual selection constraint in the processing of the proponent's re-interpreted, and thus possibly fallacious, standpoint or argument.

In doing so, we aim to give a fuller account of the working of the straw man fallacy, both in terms of its dialectical incorrectness and rhetorical treacherousness, by considering that our answer to question 2) can specify the conditions under which what we described in our answer to question 1) occurs.

COGNITIVE BIASES AND ARGUMENTATION: THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION OF PERSUASION

Vasco CORREIA (New University of Lisbon)

Pascal Engel convincingly suggests in a number of papers (1997, 2001a, 2001b) that although our beliefs are often distorted by a variety of cognitive biases which we are not always aware of (Kahneman, Tversky, Gilovitch, Kunda, etc.) we remain nevertheless responsible for the rationality of our beliefs, insofar as we can (and therefore should) exert a certain degree of control over the process of belief-formation. But could a similar claim be made regarding the way we give or receive a persuasive message? Does it make sense, for example, to hold someone accountable for adhering credulously to a fallacious form of argument? And conversely, are we responsible for the irrational attitudes that might insidiously compromise the validity of our own argumentation schemes? To be sure, cognitive biases are typically unconscious mechanisms which arise without the subject's intentional effort, and to that extent it would seem inappropriate to blame the arguer or the listener for being irrational, but on the other hand it remains possible for each participant in a dialogue to try to counteract intentionally the underlying mechanisms which generally prompt motivated irrationality, namely: selective evidence gathering, selective focusing and biased misinterpretation (Mele 2001). Much like the scrupulous judge who tries to reason and argue in full objectivity, leaving aside his personal views and prejudices, we have the possibility of developing what Ziva Kunda calls an "effort of objectivity" (Kunda 1990) in an attempt to reduce the impact of biases and heuristics both in the way we argue and in the way we process our opponents' arguments. Conversely, Praktanis and Aronson (1992) suggest that we should adopt defensive strategies of critical thinking when exposed to manipulative forms of persuasion. In this paper I argue that it makes sense to speak of a deontology of persuasion (or an "ethics of rhetoric"), which would be the analogue, in the realm of argumentation theory, of what Pascal Engel, Linda Zagzebski, James Montmarket and others call the "ethics of belief". If this analysis is correct, argumentation theory should encompass three (and not just two) levels of normativity: not only the conditions of validity of deductive arguments (logic) and the conditions validity of defeasible arguments (informal logic), but also the conditions of legitimacy of persuasive arguments, i.e. the conditions under which it becomes possible to distinguish between legitimate persuasion and manipulation.

PRESUPPOSING REDEFINITIONS: IMPLICIT STRATEGIES FOR PERSUASIVELY DEFINING
Fabrizio MACAGNO (New University of Lisbon)

Redefinitions are crucial communicative moves in argumentation: by means of redefinitions a new concept can be identified and referred to, and an old word can be used to reach a specific conclusion. However, such moves can be dangerous when left implicit and used to mischievously lead the interlocutor to accept a viewpoint, taking advantage of an ambiguity. Stevenson analyzed the argumentative use of redefinitions introducing the concept of persuasive definition, namely a definition aimed at altering the descriptive content of a word (its denotation) while its emotive meaning remains unchanged. However, he did not provide any criteria to assess when and why such moves are fallacious. The purpose of this research is to inquire into redefinitions distinguishing between the propositional, the pragmatic, and the argumentative level. Redefinitions are shown as dialogical moves or speech acts, which can be explicit or presupposed, and are used to reach a value judgment. However, when left implicit such redefinitions may be unduly presumed to be accepted, and therefore may be overlooked by the interlocutor, so that he or she is led to accept unwanted conclusions, or to fulfil the burden of proving that such definition is not commonly accepted.

In order to show the implicit mechanism of fallacious persuasive definitions, a particular strategy of implicit redefinition will be described, namely the redefinition by false dichotomy, in which a word is given a new meaning in order to be used in reasoning from alternatives.

ARGUMENTATION FROM EXPERT OPINION IN MEDIA-BASED SCIENTIFIC DEBATE

Sara GRECO-MORASSO (University College London) & Carlo MORASSO (University College London)

This paper presents the analysis of the use of correct and manipulative uses of argumentation *from expert opinion* in scientific journalism. Expert opinion is one of the possible applications of argumentation from authority, which results particularly interesting from the cognitive point of view. In fact, the argumentative *locus* from authority, rather than being an indirect source of evidence for the listener to make her own reasoned judgement, may sometimes make this judgement seem superfluous. In this way, argumentation from authority could become a sort of cognitive shortcut that hinders argumentation rather than fostering it; it may be used as an immunisation against reasoning.

As a particularly significant *activity type* (van Eemeren 2010) in which appeals to expert opinion are frequently made, we examine media-based debate over controversial scientific issues. The centrality of science to modern life has put several scientific controversies at the core of the challenges facing the global society (e.g. global warming; genetically modified food...). Scientists have been asked by the governments, via the founding agencies, to develop a closer link with the general and not necessarily science literate population, not merely “teaching” them what they are expected to know about a specific topic, but developing argumentative dialogues. This new role challenges scientists and it is general perception that more effort and more creativity are necessary in this field (Sykes 2007). From the argumentative point of view, this poses a challenge on how expert opinion is used by scientists in the public debate (Leshner 2003).

This paper addresses this topic trying to fulfil two different goals.

The first goal is theoretical. We elaborate on the critical questions for the locus from expert opinion put forward by Walton (1997, 2006). We assume these questions as a working hypothesis for the analysis of fallacious uses of this locus but we try to insert them in a more systematic framework. This systematization concerns two aspects: (a) following Goodwin (2010), we take into consideration the expert-layperson human relationship as an *agency relationship*; this can help put many of the fallacious uses of the argument from expert opinion in the perspective of the human motivations behind the derailments of the arguers’ strategic manoeuvring (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002). (b) we adopt the Argumentum Model of Topics (Rigotti and Greco Morasso 2006, 2010) to analyse the inferential configuration of arguments and try to show how critical questions and sub-critical questions (Walton 1997) can be systematically associated to the different premises composing an argument from expert opinion.

The second goal of this paper is to provide an argumentative analysis of a case-study about sound and unsound uses of expert opinion in scientific journalism. We consider a specific case of media-based scientific debate appeared in the monthly magazine *Eureka* published by The Times (UK) from December 2009 to November 2010. *Eureka* publishes a page called “Fight Club”, in which two experts are invited to confront on a controversial scientific issue. The authority of experts in this case is a sensitive matter, because the issues themselves are undecided for the contemporary scientific community. In this specific media context, appeals to expert opinion are made at two levels: by the *Eureka* editors; and by the expert themselves, who

may quote other expert sources. By means of an empirical argumentative analysis based on our re-elaborated account of Walton's critical questions, we consider the different forms of arguments from expert opinion appearing at these two levels and try to draw some conclusions about how and why they can be manipulative.

LA RHÉTORIQUE: À LA RECHERCHE D'UN PARADIGME PERDU
Emmanuelle DANBLON (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Je voudrais saisir cette occasion pour repenser la rhétorique dans toute sa dimension pratique. Une discipline pratique mais consciente d'elle-même. Ni philosophie, ni artisanat pur, la rhétorique comme pratique intelligente, peut être appréhendée dans toute sa globalité comme un *paradigme*, c'est-à-dire tout à la fois substance, doxa, ensemble de *topoi* mais aussi *technè* : praxis (savoirs faire), hèxis (acquisition de qualités dispositionnelles à long terme). Pourtant, presque dès sa naissance, la rhétorique a été en quelque sorte *dénaturée* pour des raisons bien connues des historiens de la rhétorique.

Nous chercherons à comprendre ce que nous avons manqué au cours de cette dénaturation à savoir la possibilité d'articuler une exigence de rationalité à une sensibilité respectant les émotions, les intuitions, le besoin d'utiliser la fiction, mais aussi, la nécessité pour une communauté de célébrer un monde commun.

Si la rhétorique est une discipline *pratique* plutôt que *théorique*, elle exige néanmoins, pour être mise en œuvre, un retour —forcément réflexif— sur sa propre pratique. Nous tenterons, à travers des exemples concrets, de jeter les bases théoriques des diverses fonctions sociales et discursives de cette pratique intelligente qu'est la rhétorique. Ces bases emprunteront à la psychologie cognitive, à l'anthropologie mais aussi à la rhétorique (Vico, Favret-Saada, Clément). Il s'agira finalement de décrire les conditions de la persuasion comme, visée essentielle de la rhétorique, à partir de la définition suivante : « exercice d'acquisition d'une disposition à la liberté ».

LES FRONTIÈRES DE L' *AD VERECUNDIAM* : L'AUTORITÉ PAR L'ÉVIDENCE

Thierry HERMAN (Université de Neuchâtel)

Le recours à l'autorité est un grand classique de l'argumentation (Goodwin 1998, Walton 1997). L'impossibilité matérielle et humaine de tout savoir rend nécessaire un appui confiant sur les faits rapportés par autrui. Cette nécessité argumentative a pourtant souvent été vue comme une faute recevant le label du sophisme *ad verecundiam*. La logique informelle a une position ambivalente sur l' *ad verecundiam*. Son efficacité réelle - certains parlent d'une heuristique d'autorité et de nombreux travaux sont consacrés à la question de la crédibilité de la source (Metzger et al. 2003)- nécessiterait un examen éthique préalable se prononçant sur l'usage normal ou abusif du raisonnement. On peut se demander si cela est bien réaliste. Mais ce n'est pas le seul problème.

D'abord, c'est un des schèmes argumentatifs dont la schématisation classique reliant argument et conclusion est largement implicite. En effet, pour plusieurs travaux dans le domaine, une proposition telle que « Le professeur Ross Andersen affirme que X conduit à Y » doit se lire comme une double argumentation : celle qui est explicitement posée entre X et Y et un processus implicite du type « Si Ross Andersen est professeur, ce qu'il dit doit être vrai, étant donné que les professeurs sont des experts reconnus dans un domaine » (Walton et al. 2008). Autrement dit, l'autorité est posée plutôt qu'argumentée, légitimée ou justifiée. On pourrait même remettre en question ici la présence d'une démarche argumentative : ne s'agit-il pas au fond que d'évidentialité (Dendale & Van Bogeart 2007) ? Si on ne mentionnait que le prénom et le nom du professeur sans la fonction, pourrait-on aussi analyser l'exemple donné comme une argumentation *ad verecundiam* ? Allons au-delà encore et imaginons que je sois le professeur Ross Andersen : si je pose simplement « X », doit-on l'analyser comme un fait légitimé par ma propre autorité ?

Au-delà de l'exploration des limites ou des frontières de l' *ad verecundiam* effleurée ici, je voudrais interroger un cas-frontière en prenant appui sur la formule « on le sait » ou « on le sait bien » dans l'écrit scientifique (Thue Vold 2008). A la fois marqueur évidentiel et modalité épistémique (Gosselin 2010), « on le sait » me semble constituer une figure au centre même du colloque : elle est persuasive puisqu'elle évacue toute mise en doute, elle se fonde sur un biais cognitif du type « effet de mode » (Bandwagon fallacy) tout en renforçant l'autorité du locuteur et constitue de ce fait un moyen de manipulation par le discours. La périphrase verbale me semble donc être un membre représentatif d'une sous-catégorie de l' *ad verecundiam* que j'appellerai ici l'autorité par l'évidence.

HOW PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES HAVE INFLUENCED THE EVOLUTION OF TWO ENGLISH CLAUSAL CONNECTORS

Mathilde PINSON (Paris 3)

Connectors tend to vary (Milroy and Milroy, 1999 [1985]: 70), whether it be along the diatopic, the diastratic or the diachronic axes. From this broad range of variant forms there emerge a number of pragmatic applications, which play a decisive role in the evolution of such connectors.

My micro-analysis addresses two pairs of clausal connectors in Contemporary English, namely the variables *like/as* and *to/Ø* after the verb *help*. Although these connectors relate to different aspects of syntax (adverbial subordination vs. complementation), they both illustrate the pervasive influence of persuasive communication on language change.

I will demonstrate in my study on political and advertising discourse that the semantic and/or sociolinguistic distinctions which separate the two variants of each pair have been used extensively in the mass media as peripheral cues (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

The following are two typical instances of this phenomenon:

(1) Senator Clinton is the only Democratic candidate for president who supports this amendment. She said, like she did five years ago, that it is a way to support diplomacy. I disagree. (Barack Obama, Remarks in Des Moines, 12 October 2007)

(2) Dristan helps you Ø breathe free and easy, as if you were far away from pollen and allergy irritation. (1950s American commercial)

In both cases, it is not only the informative content, but also the form of the message, that is intended to influence the targeted audience. In excerpt (1), the speaker is campaigning for primary elections. The use of *like*, rather than *as*, enables him to project a specific image of himself (cf. *speaker design*, Schilling-Estes, 2002). Indeed, it helps to create a feeling of in-group identity (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 107-112) that simulates interpersonal closeness with the audience, thereby compensating for the rather impersonal quality of broadcast speeches. The subordinator *like* epitomises the social changes which are disrupting the traditional separation between the public and private spheres (Fairclough, 1992: 98). Originally considered “intimate” (Bolinger, 1986: 335), this subordinator is here used in a public context, in order to engender trust. It has been observed that trust increases the level of cognitive processing in audiences (Taillard, 2000: 173). Moreover, using an in-group identity marker helps to stave away potential negative attitudes from the electorate: Barack Obama is one of us and not (depending on the potential bias of the hearer) a Harvard technocrat, a Black man whose father was a Muslim, a future autocratic federal leader, etc. This linguistic technique is just one of several strategies (i.e. personal references, humour, attempts to maximize the audience’s positive face) used to simulate interpersonal closeness.

Sentence (2) also has a pragmatic value, since it is meant to trigger a purchase. The verb *help* is frequently used in advertising because it helps to present the properties of a product, while at the same time making them attractive. Though it is generally accepted that the verb *help* can be followed by a *to*-infinitive or a bare infinitive, there is a remarkably high incidence of bare

infinitive complements after *help* in advertising discourse. As an infinitive marker, *to* is almost semantically empty. And yet, the omission of *to* in this structure is not meaningless. Firstly, one might say that because this structure was originally only compatible with a [+animate] subject, it serves to humanize the product. Indeed, personification of the product is known to be a powerful marketing strategy (Hermerén, 1999). Secondly, the omission of *to* highlights the efficiency of the product because it reflects the agentivity of the subject, whereas the use of *to* would express an indirect action (Duffley, 1992 ; Fischer, 1995). Thirdly, it gives the impression that the effect of the product is instantaneous, because the absence of *to* shows that the two events – the helping process and the result – are conceptualized as a unique macro-event. This is due to the absence of the prospective meaning of *to* (Chuquet, 1986) and to the iconicity of the structure, the absence of *to* reflecting a conceptual closeness between the two events (Givón, 1985).

Though these strategies cannot be considered instances of deception as such, the words and the structures used are evidently far from neutral. The omission of *to*, as a syntactic device, operates largely below the reader/listener's threshold of consciousness. It can therefore be associated with a kind of subliminal strategy. The semantic import of the structure has been so popular that the bare infinitive after *help* now constitutes the statistical norm in English.

On the other hand, the use of *like* rather than *as* was highly salient in the 1950s, because of a notorious American commercial (*Winston tastes good like a cigarette should*). Afterwards, the use of *like* spread drastically in conversation and it can now also be found in writing (in omniscient narration and even occasionally in academic prose). The subordinator *like* gradually assimilated into the norm of conversational English and thus became progressively destigmatized. The use of *like* is now sufficiently unmarked that it goes unnoticed in a political speech, while subtly building up trust. The fact that it is now frequently employed by famous public speakers will, in all likelihood, facilitate its total integration into Standard English (Fitzmaurice, 2000).

As suggested, subtle semantic (*to/∅*) or sociolinguistic (*as/like*) distinctions are used to influence the target audience. Given the importance of persuasive communication, the favoured structures rapidly become the statistical norm. Consequently, strategies intended to influence through language tend, in the long term, to influence language itself.

THE PERSUASIVENESS OF TWO-SIDED MESSAGES IN CORPORATE REPORTING DISCOURSE

Agatha FILIMON (Università della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano)

The proposed paper will focus on the persuasiveness of the two-sided messages encountered in a number of sample letters to shareholders and/or stakeholders from a corpus of corporate annual financial-economic and sustainability/corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports.

Corporate reports are communication tools by means of which listed companies inform their shareholders and other categories of stakeholders about their operations and financial performance, in order to build trust, to influence the investment decision of current and potential investors, and to legitimate themselves as responsible citizens of the communities in which they operate. While financial-economic annual reports are compulsory and highly regulated publications, CSR/sustainability reports are voluntary and less regulated information disclosures. Compared to annual reports, CSR reports are more heterogeneous in what regards the content and the audience(s), in spite of a current tendency to standardization.

In both reporting genres, top management's introductory letters to share-/stakeholders (usually) comprise both positive and negative corporate aspects related to the advocated claims. In annual reports, for instance, managers' tendency to withhold bad news and early disclose good news is counterbalanced by "conservative recognition rules" that prevent from unverifiable optimistic outlooks, but encourage early recognition of potential losses (Kothari & al. 2009:243). However, managers' presentation of negative or positive corporate aspects may still be biased by self-serving attributive errors (Bettman & Weitz 1983, Salancik & Meindl 1984), or by an opportunistic, impression management behavior (Merkl-Davies & Brennan 2007). Compared to annual reports, sustainability/CSR reports are more often suspected of PR-"spin", their real contribution to the corporate accountability in front of internal and external stakeholders being questioned (Schaltegger & Burritt 2006, Greenwood 2007).

Previous linguistic studies related to two-sided corporate disclosures principally addressed the narrative sections of annual reports (and less, if ever, those of sustainability reports), mainly by means of content analysis (Merkl-Davies & Brennan 2007). Thus, instances of rhetorical manipulation through "persuasive language as a proxy for obfuscation" (p.139), and a number of peripheral presentation devices (manipulations by numbers and visuals, text readability) have been identified.

The current paper proposes a different, argumentative-persuasive approach to the two-sided messages included in management's introductory letters from both types of reports, in an attempt to estimate the influence of these messages on the credibility and the persuasiveness of the managerial (and corporate) discourse. More precisely, the study will investigate:

1. The amount of two-sided messages in the two types of letters, in particular the proportion of refutational versus nonrefutational two-sided messages, in line with O'Keefe's (1999) research on two-sided nonadvertising messages and their associated effects on the credibility and persuasiveness of the discourse. Considering (a) the genre-specific disclosure policies (stricter in annual reports and softer in CSR reports), (b) managers' disclosure motivation (e.g. avoidance of litigation, agency relationship and compensations, impression management etc.) and (c) audience's expected information demand and

critical attitude for each type of report (O'Halloran 2003, Smith 2003), a working hypothesis has been elaborated, foreseeing a larger total amount of two-sided messages in annual report letters, but a higher relative percentage of refutational two-sided messages in sustainability/CSR letters. However, a proper estimation of the credibility and persuasive effects of this distribution (in line with O'Keefe's research) requires a further analysis of the argumentative soundness and the pragmatic interpretation of the two-sided messages from both types of letters, especially of the refutational two-sided messages.

2. Consequently, the study will observe the structural-argumentative, pragmatic and (plausible) persuasive characteristics of the main types of refutational two-sided messages encountered in the two types of letters, with a focus on their manipulative potential. This analytical phase will be carried out in line with complementary approaches to fallacies coming from the theory of argumentation (Rigotti 2005, 2006; Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010, 2006-2010; van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992; Walton 2010) and pragmatics (Rocci 2008a, 2008b; Chilton 2005), combined with insights from the persuasion research (Eagly and Chaiken 1993; O'Keefe 2009). A particular emphasis will be placed on the exploitation of keywords in these manipulative moves, according to Rigotti and Rocci's (2005) model of argumentative cultural keywords, and its application in the corporate context (Filimon 2010, 2009).

The study is conducted on a corpus of introductory messages to shareholders/stakeholders from the annual reports and correspondent sustainability/CSR reports of 18 listed companies (and their subsidiaries), published in 2008 and referring to the financial year 2007. Methodologically, it will comprise a two-level argumentative analysis (in line with the pragma-dialectic principles (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1999, Snoeck Henkemans 1997) and the Argumentum Model of Topics (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010, 2006-2010)), followed by a multidisciplinary interpretative phase that will combine the theory of argumentation with elements of discourse analysis and pragmatics, corporate communication and persuasion research.

ARGUMENTATIVE DECISIONS: THE ROLE OF COSTS AND BENEFITS IN PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTATION

Fabio PAGLIERI (Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione, CNR Roma)

Recent work in argumentation theory (Woods 2004, XXXX 2007, 2009, 2010, submitted, XXXX & Castelfranchi 2010, Hample et al. forthcoming, XXXX & Woods forthcoming a, b) has suggested that greater attention should be paid to:

- (1) the role of personal goals, as opposed to dialogical goals (in the sense of Walton & Krabbe 1995), in orienting the production and interpretation of arguments;
- (2) the constraints posed by bounded cognitive resources on the production and interpretation of arguments, and the resulting need to appreciate cost/benefit considerations in understanding human argumentation;
- (3) the centrality of decision-making in the conduction of argumentative discourse, not only to assess what is the right move to make in a given situation (as it is customary in normative approaches to argumentation, such as Walton & Krabbe 1995, Johnson 2000, van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004), but also to understand how arguers may opt (or not) for that particular move.

This proposed shift of focus should not be dismissed as a step towards a “merely descriptive” view of argumentation. Even though understanding why and how people in fact argue is, on this approach, a necessary condition to formulate a meaningful theory of argumentation, the theory is neither intended nor destined to confine itself to descriptive concerns. Looking at argumentative decisions does not prevent from formulating normative standards for such decisions, given the arguer’s goals and available means – and bounded rationality dictates to take heed of the limitations of such means, but does not rule out the possibility of mistakes that are not interpretable as “necessary evils” or forced shortcuts. Similarly, the fact that the arguer’s personal goals are crucial to understand argumentative behavior does not exclude the possibility of determining what goals the arguers ought to pursue, in order to satisfy some agreed standard of legitimate conduct. In short, analyzing argumentation from the standpoint of motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990), goal-oriented action (Conte & Castelfranchi 1995), and resource bounded decision-making (Simon 1955, 1956, Kahneman et al. 1982, Rubinstein 1998, Gigerenzer & Selten 2001) is fully compatible with the definition of normative standards about the rationality and the ethics of argumentative discourse.

In this paper I will discuss the implications of this approach for analyzing the persuasive use of argumentation, starting from the assumption that argumentative decisions are, like any other decision, oriented by one’s goals and constrained by cost/benefit considerations. This sets the strategic arena of persuasive argumentation: both arguer and interpreter of a persuasive message tries to achieve an optimal balance between their own costs and benefits, and both take as granted in their decision that the counterpart will try to do the same. To put it simply, in argumentative decision-making my costs and benefits are constraints to satisfy, whereas your costs and benefits are opportunities to exploit.

I will first clarify that this strategic view of persuasive argumentation does not imply any cynicism on the ultimate motives of the arguers: in fact, persuasion could aim either to mislead or to enlighten, and in both cases costs and benefits would still play the same basic role in the communicative process. Then I will discuss what testable predictions this approach generates on two specific phases of persuasive argumentation: engagement, that is, the decision to enter or avoid a potential argument, and termination, that is, the decision to continue or end an argumentative exchange that has not yet produced its intended persuasion. Some empirical studies testing such predictions will also be presented (Hample et al. forthcoming, XXXX et al. in preparation). On the grounds of these results, I will propose a refined definition of persuasion and characterize manipulation as a specific sub-case of it, with its own strategic peculiarities for argumentative decision-making. Finally, I will compare this approach with relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986; Wilson & Sperber 2002) and with the argumentative view of reasoning recently championed by Mercier and Sperber (forthcoming), to highlight commonalities and differences.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

LA NOTION D'ARSENAL ARGUMENTATIF. L'INVENTIVITÉ RHÉTORIQUE DANS L'HISTOIRE

Marc ANGENOT (McGill University, Montreal)

Je propose d'aborder la rhétorique de l'argumentation comme l'étude de faits historiques et sociaux, d'étudier la rhétorique non comme un intemporel «art de persuader par le discours»¹ mais comme une approche méthodologique à inscrire au cœur de l'histoire intellectuelle, politique et culturelle.

Une histoire dialectique et rhétorique telle que je l'envisage serait l'étude de la variation socio-historique des types d'argumentations, des moyens de preuve, des méthodes de persuasion. Rien en effet ne me semble plus spécifique à des états de société, aux groupes sociaux, aux «familles» idéologiques et aux «champs» professionnels, que l'argumentable qui y prédomine. Une telle histoire du raisonnable et des enchaînements persuasifs acceptables est à peine ébauchée, il en existe bien des éléments (sous un vocabulaire disparate) chez divers historiens – ainsi que je le rappelle – mais nulle synthèse. Je donne dans une telle problématique à «rationnel», ou si vous voulez à «raisonnable», un sens relatif, historiciste: le terme se rapporte à l'ensemble des schémas persuasifs qui ont été acceptés quelque part et en un temps donné ou qui sont acceptés en tel ou tel «milieu», dans telle ou telle «sodalité» politique² comme sagaces et convaincants alors même qu'ils seront tenus pour faibles, sophistiques, «aberrants», comme on dit de nos jours, en d'autres cultures, d'autres milieux ou d'autres temps.

¹ Olivier Reboul, *Introduction à la rhétorique*. Paris: PUF, 1991, 4.

² Je me rapporte à la terminologie de Maxime Rodinson, *De Pythagore à Lénine. Des activistes idéologiques*. Paris: Fayard, 1993.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28 2011

KEYNOTE LECTURE

CREDIBILITY AND TRUST OF INFORMATION IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS: THE USE OF
COGNITIVE HEURISTICS

Miriam METZGER (University of California Santa Barbara)

Digital media are posing new challenges for people to locate information they can trust. At the same time, societal reliance on information that is available only or primarily online is increasing. This keynote lecture will discuss recent research conducted at UC Santa Barbara that examines how information consumers make judgments about the credibility and accuracy of the information they encounter online. In particular, it will center on subjectivity in human information processing and the use of cognitive heuristics in credibility evaluation. Recent data from a large-scale project will be used to illustrate the frequency and types of cognitive heuristics that information consumers use when determining what sources and information to trust online.

COMMUNICATION AND EMOTION: AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

Hugo MERCIER (University of Pennsylvania) & Guillaume DEZECACHE (Institut Jean Nicod, ENS, Paris)

The expression of emotion is a topic of longstanding interest for evolutionary thinkers, famously starting with Darwin (1872). It is generally admitted that facial expressions of emotions, for instance, have a communicative function. Yet this topic has never been properly addressed using the modern framework of the evolution of communication (Maynard Smith & Harper, 2003; Scott-Phillips, 2008). Within this framework, one must ask: What allows for the stability of communication? What stops senders from abusing receivers? In the case of humans, the expression of emotions poses another puzzle: Why do we do it at all? With its unsurpassed ability to transmit propositions, ostensive communication has become the prominent communicative engine for humans. Why then do non-ostensive emotional expressions – in the face, the posture, the tone – still play a major role in interpersonal relations (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994)? Why are we more moved by someone crying than by someone who tells us, with a flat tone, that she is very sad?

We suggest that the answer to these two puzzles is linked: emotional expressions are useful because their reliability is checked in a way that is different and complementary from the way we check ostensively communicated information. In this later domain we have evolved specific mechanisms of epistemic vigilance (Sperber et al.). In particular, receivers check communicated information against their background beliefs: if the two are coherent, they are more likely to accept the communicated information. Emotional information is problematic for such a mechanism because we have no direct access to a person's internal states, and so very little background beliefs against which the communicated information could be checked. We can easily elicit emotions through ostensive communication when we tell a sad story for instance, but then listeners are able to check the plausibility of the story against their other beliefs.

But this answer presupposes that non-ostensive expressions of emotions are in some ways more reliable than ostensive communication. And so we must still answer the first question asked above: What stops senders of emotional signals from abusing receivers? To address this question, we will show that there are at least two mechanisms that are used to keep emotional signals reliable. The first is designed for innocuous situations, situations in which the cost of the wrong reaction to an emotional signal is small. This mechanism slowly habituates the response to an unreliable signal, as when parents progressively learn that their first child can cry without being in major distress. The second mechanism is designed for potentially costly situations. For instance, in a fight, one should be very careful about reacting to the signals emitted by the opponent. This mechanism will rely on cues about the identity of the signaler, and heavily discount emotional signals in competitive situations, particularly from out-groups. We will argue for the existence of these two mechanisms based on a review of the evidence for the contextual modulation of the responses to emotional signals (e.g., Bourgeois & Hess, 2008; Lanzetta & Englis, 1989).

EFFECTS OF LINGUISTIC FRAMING ON INVESTMENT DECISIONS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Dieter THOMA (University of Mannheim) & Pavla MARTÁKOVÁ (University of Mannheim)

Finance theory, in general, still assumes that individuals are able to arrive at unbiased decisions, hence that irrelevant information does not impact their decisions. Empirical evidence shows, however, that if the very same investment is described either positively or negatively, the description alone strongly affects even professional decision makers (Kirchler, Maciejovsky, & Weber, 2005; Roszowski & Snelbecker, 1990). Linguistic framing is a particularly effective technique of manipulation based on anchoring a concept in broader storylines with the objective to affect the perception of presented facts (Minsky, 1977). Framing can induce cognitive biases and thus influence decision behavior (Kahneman & Tversky, 1986), and the financial industry uses it systematically in advertising (Huhmann & Bhattacharyya, 2005). Given increasingly complex and globalized financial products, the possible consequences of manipulation of investment decisions gain additional attention.

In a questionnaire-based experiment, this study examined the manipulative effects of linguistic framing on an investment decision. The experiment employed three positive, but qualitatively different frames, to orally present two objectively identical investment alternatives. Participants (N = 41) were provided with a fictional budget of a charity they were in charge of and had to arrive at an investment decision between a risk-free and a risky investment. The conditions were (1) a purely informational frame, (2) an explanatory frame, and (3) a narrative 'academia' frame that emphasized scientific and academic aspects of the risky investment option.

The response data were submitted to a three-way ANOVA. Results show that condition (3) investors allocated a significantly higher portion of their budget to the risky alternative than the other two groups. Comparisons between condition (1) and (2) further indicate that providing investors simply with more verbal information is not enough to manipulate their decision. The investment behavior suggests that while the perceived uncertainty regarding the risky investment was comparable across the three investor groups, the narrative frame improved the perceived quality of the provided information, which in turn increased the investors' willingness to take on uncertainty at the cost of the risk-free investment alternative. On the basis of these findings, we discuss practical implications for financial advisory activity and (linguistic) investor education.

EFFECT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL UNCERTAINTIES IN JUDGMENTS AND DECISION MAKING

Marie JUANCHICH (Kingston University London), Karl TEIGEN (University of Oslo) & Amélie GOURDON (University of Birmingham)

Uncertainty is more than a probability on a scale and thus predictions could convey implicit meanings. We suggest that speakers communicate the source of their uncertainty by framing their prediction with either a personal mode “I am uncertain that the team will win” or with an impersonal mode “It is uncertain that the team will win”. We found that participants judged impersonal prediction more informative, more based on statistical information than personal prediction. In addition participants were more willing to bet according to impersonal prediction. The present research focuses on how uncertainties are communicated, understood and used. From a mathematical point of view, uncertainty can be described by numerical probabilities: numbers ranging from 0 (impossible) to 1.0 (full certainty). Yet uncertainty cannot be reduced to a point on an axis and can be characterized as well by its source. Indeed uncertainty could be deemed from lack of knowledge (i.e., ignorance) or from the character of events themselves (i.e., disposition of the world). As numerical probabilities, quantifiers of the natural language (e.g., there is a chance, it is almost certain) can convey different ranges of uncertainty. We suggest that these terms could reflect the source of uncertainty by the mean of the pronoun used to describe the uncertain state. For example one can say “I am uncertain” reflecting an internal uncertainty, whereas someone else can prefer “it is uncertain”, reflecting an uncertainty attributed to the world. We conducted experiences intending to explore how the personal and the impersonal modes of predictions (I am uncertain vs., It is uncertain) are perceived by the recipient and influence its subsequent decision making in football game prediction contexts.

In the first experience 246 participants, non expert of soccer cup, read a prediction about a match outcome and then judged its informativeness, the degree and kind of knowledge of the speaker, the attitude of the speaker towards the team and finally, their own willingness to bet. In a mixed design, the degree of certainty of the prediction was a within-subject factor (low, mild vs. high probability of occurrence) and the mode of prediction (personal vs. impersonal) was a between subject factor. Results indicated that external predictions were judge more based on statistics, more informative and would be more used in case of betting. In the second experiment we manipulated in addition the expertise of the source of the speaker and broaden the set of questions about the prediction (degree of correctness if the event happen, degree of encouragement) and on the speaker (i.e., to what extent the speaker based the prediction on intuition). Results showed that the mode of prediction (i.e., I am uncertain vs. It is uncertain) interacts with the degree of expertise of the speaker to determine the inference made about the prediction and about the speaker. Indeed, experts were judged more convincing when they were using internal prediction whereas laypeople were judged more convincing when they were using internal prediction.

The source of certainty manipulated by the mean of the personal pronoun influences the inference drawn by the hearer on the speaker’s knowledge and consequently was found to influence subsequent decision making. These results show the need to take into account different dimensions of uncertainty, such as the attribution of its source, and to not consider uncertainty along the single probability frequentistically based dimension.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEANING CONSTRUCTION AND CRITIQUE: I UNDERSTAND WHAT HABERMAS MEANS WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT "WAHRHEIT"

Paul SARAZIN (Lancaster University)

Habermas has been often criticised (e.g. Foucault, Honneth) for his claim that communication can serve as a cornerstone of a critique of society. This position (re-)opens at least two debates, which we can address, in my opinion, better now than back then: the influence of language on our thinking (or vice-versa) and the comparison of speaker's informative intention with hearer interpretation.

That language could be more than simply a means of making truth-conditional assertions, and that it can also perform and demand actions and possibly also work as a basis for human cooperative action within communication, has been recognised at the latest since the works of Austin, Grice and Searle. Their names all appear in Habermas' elaborations on the raising of validity claims of *Wahrheit* (truth), *Wahrhaftigkeit* (truthfulness) and *Richtigkeit* (rightness).

If, however, one poses the question of what Austin and Searle have to say about linguistic meaning construction or how and why an interlocutor fulfils speech act *y*, instead of another one, with utterance *x*, then one finds little in the literature of these authors. Moreover, we may question with Grice's formulation of "what is meant" exactly what was meant by Grice.

Though if we accept the claim that the truth conditions of an utterance's proposition are, as a rule, different for the explicit and implicit content (Carston, Sperber and Wilson), in combination with the claim that implicatures can be interpreted by the hearer over non-trivial inferences drawing on socio-cultural background assumptions, situational context and perceptual information (see partly overlapping and partly distinct accounts in "semantic underdeterminacy" (e.g. Carston) and Jaszczolt's "merger representation"), we may come to the following conclusion: analyses of the speaker's informative intention, whose implicit content can still be denied, are entirely plausible.

Whilst I do not wish to sign up to the whole "Habermasian project", I do nonetheless insist that we can say a lot about the meaning of (political) utterances and that we can evaluate these on their validity claims.

VERBAL CONFRONTATION IN SPANISH SPEAKING CHILDREN'S INTERACTION

Martha SHIRO (Universidad Central de Venezuela) & Rosa MONTES (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla)

Our purpose in this study is to examine the development of children's argumentation skills when they participate in a joint, collaborative activity in which they must reach a common goal. We have recorded, transcribed and analyzed the verbal exchanges of 15 Spanish speaking Mexican children, aged between 5 and 12, playing computer games in pairs (sometimes with the presence of adults and other children). By means of verbal interaction, the children needed to negotiate control over the computer, solved game related problems, and resolved conflicts in order to successfully complete their activity. As all participants felt highly motivated to play the computer games, their spontaneous conversations reflected how they intended and/or succeeded in modifying one another's behavior. Our main focus in this study is to analyze children's participation in verbal confrontations (i.e. sequences of disagreement in which one participant takes the role of a proponent and the other that of an opponent) in order to describe the argumentative strategies and the evaluative language used as they take a stance and position themselves in these roles. The questions that guided our research are the following: a. What types of contextual or co-textual factors prompt the emergence of a sequence of disagreement? b. How does the opponent mark his or her disagreement with the previous speakers? c. How are these verbal confrontations resolved? and d. How do disagreement markers vary with age? We identified the sequences of disagreement in each transcript, by marking their beginnings and endings. In each sequence, the opponent's utterance was analyzed in functional terms (speaker's intent, type and degree of disagreement). Then, the previous speaker's contribution was described in similar terms with the purpose of accounting for the utterance which triggered the disagreement. Subsequently, we examined the remaining utterances and decided whether the confrontation was escalating or winding down. We looked at uses of evaluative language such as negatives, interrogatives, expressions of epistemic and deontic modality, evidentiality, mitigation). Our findings suggest that boys and girls engage in different types of disagreement. Girls reach a consensus in shorter exchanges, use questions more than imperatives when they confront the previous speaker. In older children, these different styles of confrontation become even more marked. Younger children, particularly boys, tend to use gestures or body movement to modify the interlocutor's behavior (e.g. pushing the other child's hand off, when they want to take control of the mouse). They also tend to use more aggressive terms when they address their partners. This study can shed light on how children problematize a situation and how they structure their verbal confrontations at different ages.