

The Manipulative Disguise of Truth

Viviana Masia



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The Manipulative Disguise of Truth

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Tricks and threats of implicit communication
by Viviana Masia

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*...to A.,
for giving me the opportunity
to live the best nine months of my life...*

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Acknowledgments

This book comes after a long period of neverending research on the manipulative nature of implicit language. Research which unveiled both its sociointeractional and experimental facets in the guise of presuppositions, topicalisations, implicatures and vague expressions, among others. In this volume, I have not devoted much attention to experimental evidence, which is more extensively described in other recent behavioral and neurophysiological works (see references at the bottom). Instead, I wanted to zoom in on other interdisciplinary perspectives on manipulative language involving, among other things, (a) its relation to the encoding of evidentiality in human communication as well as in political discourse, (b) how it percolates into the language of the news thus contributing to make it a strongly ideologically biased type of text, and (c) on how manipulation, as caused by the use of implicit communication, may become the outcome of different translation choices. These are all domains in which (oral and written) text production becomes a crucial activity in spreading new sets of interrelated beliefs and ideologies among text users. In the last chapter, I wished to bring home to two important ongoing projects of sensitization to the phenomenon of implicit communication and to the positive effects of “teaching” how to deal with implicit contents in a message as a way to contribute to the creation of what Sbisà (2007) called a “culture of implicitness”, that is a massive collective intellectual endowment through which people of any age can smoothly navigate the traps of manipulative implicit communication and defend themselves from its most dangerous effects. The path of interdisciplinary reflection chosen for this volume is therefore targeted at improving people’s ability to inspect presumptive meanings in a message and understand how they can “distort their way of seeing things” and their knowledge of reality. Indeed, it is my belief that the more familiar people become with the manipulative traps of implicit communication, the lower the cost of unearthing such traps as well as the manipulator’s real intentions hidden behind them.

Besides making the reader acquainted with the strongly felt and challenging topic of deceptive communication, this volume also stems from the experience of my participation in the PRIN project called *IMPAQTS – Implicit Manipulation in Politics Quantitatively Assessing the Tendentiousness of Speeches* (Project code: 2017STJCE9), to which Chapter Six is also dedicated. I therefore take the opportunity to thank all its collaborators, Edoardo Lombardi Vallauri, Patrizio Campisi,

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VM.

Introduction

The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words.

– Philip K. Dick

As a linguist interested in the inner workings of the human brain when different aspects of *non-conscious* communication are decoded, I have always thought that the more we learn to use language properly, the better we become in detecting the many ways in which the richness and complexity of language rules allows pursuing infinite goals in ordinary interactions. If this may sound as a truism for most linguists as well as for other experts in communication sciences, it is by no means intuitive for those willing to better understand how language can be used to *avoid saying things* in an interaction, that is, to hide meanings, rather than overtly express them. Drawing on a metaphorical association used by Sigmund Freud to account for mind complexity, human language can be portrayed as an iceberg having its tip above the sea surface and the rest of its supporting structure below it. One may ask, why borrow such an allegory from psychology and not look for a freshly-made one for verbal language? The reason cannot be more simple and basically moves from a mere rule of resemblance. Freud believed that the way we live in the world, what we do, how we talk, the choices we make, etc., are only outward manifestations of a greater complexity underlying the psychological structure of our inner world, a world we can only access in our dreams or when we undergo hypnosis. This means that to be able to unveil our real nature, we should be able to disclose such unseen surges of our psyche and make sense of their interplay with the external reality. In the same vein, much of the content exchanged in a conversation constitutes only a part of the meanings we actually intend to convey, thus representing the tip of our iceberg; while the remaining concealed information epitomizes its covered structure. Language and psyche are indeed very similar in this respect and, what is more, they are complementary to one another, in that communication helps better understand certain psychological processes, and psychology helps better understand how language achieves certain communicative goals. From now on, I will replace the terms psyche and psychology – which were more suitable to explaining the iceberg metaphor – with the terms “mind” and, sometimes, “cognition”. The reason for this choice is that they better reflect the mental processes elicited by any

reasoning activity carried out in response to different types of information. My focus on language in this book will be on what could be roughly called its *underencoding power*, that is, its ability to convey meanings without openly expressing them in a discourse. In much pragmatics literature, this phenomenon has been variously labelled as implicit communication, indirect communication or indirect speech (Sbisà 2007; Pinker et al. 2008; Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014), to stress the fact that contents can be left not entirely coded on text structure or, in some cases, they can be transmitted in a non-assertive way (we will see later on what “non-assertive” encoding stands for in the account I will put forward). The purpose of this work is to draw a path along some of the most common and compelling manifestations of implicit communication, the manipulative *tricks* it relies on and the *threats* it can pose in different contexts of language use. Building on previous discussions on the topic, this exploration will be developed along five routes of analysis. In a first step (Chapter 1), the manipulative effects of four common strategies of implicit communication, *presupposition*, *implicature*, *topic* and *vagueness*, will be outlined based on the influence they wield on the decoding and interpretation of a sentence. Chapter 2 will discuss how manipulation through implicit communication works in different contexts of language use, such as advertising, political discourse, Twitter, etc., where the achievement of persuasive goals is far more compelling than in other communicative situations. Always in this chapter, the cognitive processes triggered by implicit language will be further appraised on experimental bases, and, notably, presenting findings from the psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic domain on the way the brain deals with different types of underencoded meaning. Chapter 3 will put forward some reflection on the relation between implicit communicative strategies and the encoding of evidential values (Masia 2017a, 2017b), generally manifested in the marking of speakers’ sources of information and commitment degrees in an interaction. It will be argued that what makes certain devices of implicit language manipulative is precisely when they interact with these epistemic meanings in an utterance. Chapter 4 is devoted to inquiring the effects of using an implicit discourse strategy, such as presupposition, in news language and how it affects the comprehension of newspaper articles. Chapter 5 will deal with implicit language in interlinguistic translation and how the different renderings of implicit discourse devices may make a translated text more or less manipulative for the target recipient. Notably, I will seek to answer the following questions: (a) how should a translator render implicitly conveyed contents from a language to another? (b) what parameters should she consider to ensure the adoption of safe and consistent translation choices? (c) how can untranslated or wrongly translated implicit contents cause a text to be manipulative if some information is only partly accessed by the addressee? A final chapter (Chapter 6) proposes a reflection on the importance of increasing people’s awareness on the use and linguistic manifestations of

implicit communication and its implications in text comprehension. The goals of two ongoing projects will be described, one aimed at testing the effects of structured training on implicit communication in university students' comprehension of political tweets containing presuppositions or implicatures, one targeted at devising a methodology to make implicit contents in political speeches accessible and their manipulative impact easily computable through a system of indexes indicating the degree of deceptiveness and tendentiousness of a political discourse as compared to another.

Hoping that the reading will not sound too tedious to both the expert and the lay reader, this book intends to gather up-to-date reflections on both the theoretical and empirical status of the so-called "presumptive" meanings in verbal communication as well as on their manifold manipulative facets in comprehension. The interdisciplinary approach of the volume is meant to better elucidate how different dimensions of implicit language may contribute to its manipulative features and what aspects of such features capitalize on our nature as interactional species, but also as species who take advantage, when possible, of the most profitable situation to manipulate others and do this in (often) hardly perceptible ways. Needless to say, in today's societies aiming at perfecting and strengthening their democratic apparatus, this practice may be dangerous, especially for those lacking the metalinguistic tools to dissect the "drowned" meanings in a (written or oral) text. This book thus wants to be a humble guide towards this desired awareness on the manipulative power of language and on the subliminal cognitive processes it exploits.

Features and functions of implicitness in verbal communication

*There are those whose primary ability is to spin wheels of manipulation.
It is their second skin and without these spinning wheels,
they simply do not know how to function.*
– C. JoyBell C.

1.1 Introduction

The study of manipulative speech has been the plank of much recent contention on deceptive processes in communication. The way language can twist reality and perspectives is a complex phenomenon and calls for drawing on several related – and, sometimes, even unrelated – research domains. In this chapter, I will attempt to address manipulative communicative strategies focusing on the role and implications of particular types of information packaging. Notably, I will seek to outline the discourse properties of implicit communication with particular regard to presupposition, implicature, topicalization and vagueness in the light of their capacity to distort content representation, which is a threatening and risky conversational move when it comes to potentially tendentious and dubious information.

1.2 Implicit communication: A working definition

From a wider perspective, Pinker (2007: 437) defines *indirect speech* as “the phenomenon in which a speaker says something he does not literally mean, knowing that the hearer will interpret it as he intended”. Narrowing the view to its most common manifestations, Sbisà (2007: 3) describes implicit communication as represented by “presupposed and implied contents which accompany what is communicated explicitly and which, together with explicit meanings, are tacitly conveyed”. The focus on implicatures and presuppositions is not otiose, yet, as we will see, other discourse devices can be resorted to with a view to conveying meanings implicitly in a message. Sbisà further observes that one crucial property of implicit communication is that it is “precisely aimed at not being attended to” (Sbisà 2007: 3) and “it is always difficult to focus one’s attention on some implicit information”. This *perceptive* aspect of communicative implicitness should not be neglected since it is (most of the time) at the basis of its manipulative power proper.

Questions that both philosophers of language and linguists from functional perspectives repeatedly ask are: Why use implicit communication? What's its function in every day conversations? When have we started to use implicit language to communicate with our conspecifics? In what way does it render communication more cooperative? One intuitive reason why we leave contents unexpressed in a message obviously relates to their familiarity. In other words, some contents are already part of a shared *common ground* (Stalnaker 2002), that is, the background of beliefs and assumptions shared up to a certain point in an interaction. When some contents or notions are already known by both speaker and receiver, they need not be made explicit anew in an utterance. In fact, if they were, they would not be interpreted as old (Givón 1983), but as new, thus being processed with greater (yet pointless) attentional effort. Our cognitive system is instead geared to optimization (Shiffrin & Schneider 1984; Levy 2008) and strives not to allocate too many resources if fewer are enough to deal with a given processing task. Clear-cut examples of this constraint are offered by pronominalization processes in natural languages. As is known, all languages have strategies to avoid repetitions of proper or common nouns when they have already been introduced in the current discourse; and, in some cases, the use of proforms is even more felicitous than the direct repetition of a word, as examples (1) and (2) below show.

- (1) Yesterday, *Mark*_i came back home from Finland. *He*_i was really tired
 (2) *Yesterday, *Mark*_i came back home from Finland. *Mark*_i was really tired

Contrary to (1), in (2), coreference between the first and the second occurrence of *Mark* would be perceived as unlikely, while the interpretation of the second *Mark* as a distinct person than the first would be more probable. Indeed, for the sake of simplicity, we usually expect language to only make explicit what our mind is not able to track down from the context of discourse even if, as I will seek to argue later on, this is not always the case.

Another widely debated use of implicit communication is the pursuit of indirectness when a more explicit and direct verbalization of some content would turn out to be indiscreet, blunt or too menacing. Pinker (2007: 437) clearly exemplifies these cases in the following uses:

- (3) a. Would you like to come and see my etchings?
 b. If you could pass the salt, that would be great
 c. Nice house you got there. Would be a real shame if something happened to it

All these utterances indirectly convey other intentional meanings and, notably, a sexual come-on (a), a polite request (b) and a threat (c). Now, should these real

communicative intentions be made explicit, the effect would be strikingly different, as shown in (4).

- (4) a. Do you want to sleep with me?
- b. Pass me the salt!
- c. I may burn down your house

So, to a certain extent, implicit language allows us to appear more refined, less rude, (apparently) less aggressive which, in some communicative situations, may also become the key to success. And, if success is a desirable achievement when we want to strike up a love affair, lubricate advantageous relationships with other colleagues or friends or be respected and appreciated by the others, it becomes vital when it comes to launching a competitive product on the market, gaining political consensus or massively influencing people's opinion on our reputation, credibility and accountability. In these other contexts, implicit communication gains a role that is not only decisive, but may also be dangerous, since it is often aimed at hiding what should not be made explicit and, even worse, what receivers *should not know*. Put another way, implicit language serves manipulative purposes in that it illegitimately influences and "twists" (Rigotti 2005: 68) people's vision of the world and, correspondingly, their convictions, beliefs and behaviors. But, in what way can this exclusive property of human language become manipulative? Before delving into this discussion, a few lines on the nature and implications of manipulative processes in language use are worth spending.

1.3 Manipulation in language

One of the most emblematic definitions of manipulation is offered by Van Dijk. In his paper *Discourse and Manipulation* (Van Dijk 2006: 360), he lays out manipulation as a "communicative and interactional practice in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interest". The binominal manipulation-control is a pivotal one, since the ultimate goal of any manipulative process is to achieve control of knowledge and persuasion of the recipient into doing what the manipulator wants her to do. It goes without saying that, to achieve this aim, manipulation has to do with human minds (Van Dijk 2006) and particularly aims at activating "preferred mental models" in recipients' representations of the world; in so doing they can understand a discourse the way the manipulator sees it. Owing to this, the impact of manipulation on human cognition often takes the form of attentional biases, in that it draws the receiver's attention to information A rather than B, in this way the resulting understanding is partial or biased, which impairs a thorough understanding of details (Van Dijk

2006: 366). But manipulation is successful when it is unperceived, namely when the recipient *is not aware* that she is being manipulated. In this respect, Franke & Rooij (2015) even make the point that the deceiver generally believes that the person to be deceived has some sort of limited reasoning power that renders the deception process at least conceivably successful. But, how can this possible?

In verbal interactions, manipulative communicative moves avail itself of general rules of discourse (Van Dijk 2006: 363). Put otherwise, ordinary linguistic structures – which did not emerge in human language to manipulate others – can be strategically used to achieve manipulative intents. As a matter of fact, the function of some discourse strategies is not the same throughout all contexts of language use, such as everyday home interactions, chats between friends or at school. Van Dijk (1997: 24) spells this out in an insightful remark on the use of metaphors.

[...] whereas metaphors in classroom discourse may have an educational function, metaphors in politics will function in a political context, for instance, in the attack of political opponents, the presentation of policies or the legitimization of political power.

So, depending on the context,¹ the use of non-literal expressions or indirect messages may either facilitate the understanding or retention of contents or eventuate in potentially dangerous rhetorical devices if they leave some relevant piece of information inaccessible for the recipient.

Following an interpretation put forth by Maillat & Oswald (2009), what makes some linguistic expressions manipulative is the fact that they rely on the same context-construction and context-selection procedure underlying the decoding of non-manipulative language (as pointed out by Attardo (1997: 778), in verbal interactions, “parties exploit the assumption of cooperation to further their unilateral [manipulative] goals”). In other words, *since the human processing system is not capable of distinguishing between manipulative and non-manipulative uses of a linguistic expression*,² it will devote to their full decoding the same attentional

1. Following Stalnaker (1999: 35), I take context to mean all “the intentions of the speaker, the knowledge, beliefs, expectations or interests of the speaker and his audience, other speech acts that have been performed in the same context, the time of utterance, the effects of the utterance, the truth value of the proposition expressed, the semantic relations between the proposition expressed and some others involved in some way.”

2. It is also worth stressing that, in some cases, manipulative intents take root because they rely on the assumption that interlocutors occasionally operate under quite different conceptions of the context of conversation (Franke & Rooij 2015). This condition hinges on the fact that what is relevant for one interlocutor’s discourse model may be less relevant for another interlocutor’s discourse model. This is why, in an interaction, a cooperative speaker should not just provide information but also the necessary background (when this is not previously shared) to make clear how that information is relevant for the current communicative task.

processes as those elicited by the same expression in non-manipulative contexts.³ Consider (5) and (6).

- (5) a. The round window overlooked the enchanted forest
 b. The corruption of political parties has indebted lots of honest citizens
- (6) a. Will you tell Jane the truth?
 b. Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well?
- (Obama 2015)

Both (5*a–b*) and (6*a–b*) look somewhat similar to one another in terms of linguistic structure and type of speech act. What changes is the content each sentence packages: that in *a*-sentences is more neutral than that in *b*-sentences, which is visibly more critical and ideologically-oriented. The processing strategies the receiver is required to carry out are thus the same for the two pairs of sentences, while only their meaning changes. Here, to be implicit, is the way some content reaches the receiver's state of awareness, namely, the likelihood that she might become convinced of something with a state of *epistemic vigilance* (Sperber et al. 2010) on its truth. What is interesting in (5) is that the existence of the round window and of corruption in politics is not being overtly asserted as in "There is a round window..." or "Political parties are corrupted..."; rather, they are both presented as general truths of the statements. By the same token, (6*a*) and *b* are open questions to which the receiver is expected to reply yes or no, but in no way do they hint at the fact that some truth should be told to Jane and that there is an economy in which only few people are rich. To increase the manipulative power of (5*b*) and (6*b*) is a twofold parameter: (i) as already said, differently than *a*-sentences, *b*-sentences convey more tendentious content and, precisely, content on which people should *be able to form their own opinion*, independently of what the speaker believes; (ii) the full decoding of *b*-sentences gets hampered by the implicit conveyance of these contents by the speaker. As a matter of fact, besides the type of content itself, what makes a sentence manipulative is especially the *packaging* it receives. Later on in this work, it will be argued that influences on our cognitive response to any linguistic input is strongly contingent on this parameter, which refers to the particular linguistic "clothing" some information receives in an utterance (Chafe 1976). In other contention (Franke & Rooij 2015) such parameter has also been correlated to the "framing effects" of some information, with particular regard to the interpretive consequences of its presentation, which has proved to be a particularly successful feature in both linguistic and non-linguistic manipulative contexts.

3. On this account, they rightfully observe that "given that persons who are targets of manipulation are not aware that they are being manipulated, we assume that their processing of the speaker's utterance is completely straightforward, and in particular that hearers assume speaker cooperativeness" Maillat & Oswald (2009: 360).

The following sections will broach the manipulative character of four discourse phenomena of implicit communication: *presupposition*, *implicature*, *topicalization* and *vagueness*. The role played by these conversational devices in manipulative communication is still the plank of vivid discussions in current argumentation studies as well as in experimental pragmatics research (Simons 2001; Sbisà 2007; Lombardi Vallauri 2018; Machetti 2011; *inter alia*). The objective of this volume is thus to contribute an up-to-date reflection on the deceptive uses of these discourse devices as well as on the interpretive biases they may determine in sentence comprehension.

1.4 The “design features” of implicit communication

1.4.1 Presupposition

One of the most striking features of human language is the ability with which it reflects different knowledge states of interlocutors. Indeed, already Chafe (1976, 1994) noticed that language works best when it complies with the current state of information in the receiver’s mind. This means that if new information is being proffered by the speaker, this state should be made clear and easily detectable by the receiver with suitable linguistic means. Similarly, if some information is old or familiar, the receiver should accordingly be made aware of that. Language capability of distinguishing between these two primary states of negotiated information is probably one of the earliest properties to have delineated its modern structure; and, possibly for this reason, it is a universal property of all languages (Simone & Lombardi Vallauri 2011: 122–123):

Since reality changes, we are surrounded by things that “appear”, “stay for a while” and “disappear” from our current experience. Those that have already appeared are “known” to us, or at least “given”, while those that have not appeared yet will be “unknown” or at least “new” at the moment of appearance. The cognitive distinction between what is known (since it already occurred) and what is new (since it occurs for the first time in the discourse and/or in the context) compels every language to have means to encode Given and New, Topic and Focus, presupposed and asserted information.

To be able to classify some content as familiar (old) or new, interlocutors also need to rely on explicit and clear-cut linguistic anchors. Among other possible strategies, these latter may take the form of *presuppositions* and *assertions* (as also mentioned in the quotation above). Along with other informational dichotomies such as topic-comment, focus-background, theme-rheme, extensively discussed in previous and more recent information structure studies (Daneš 1974; Halliday 1985;

Lambrecht 1994), this pair epitomizes a fairly recurrent strategy of information articulation of utterances and effectively contributes to their optimal processing.

The phenomenon of presupposition has been the bulk of a long tradition of studies in the philosophical and the linguistics domain (Frege 1892; Russell 1905; Stalnaker 1973; Karttunen 1973). Earlier outlines in the philosophical tradition mainly characterized it as a semantic property of utterances and, notably, the condition which a sentence should satisfy to be true. In Frege's line of reasoning (Frege 1892), a sentence like *The man who discovered penicillin died young*⁴ is true only if the condition that "there existed a discoverer of penicillin" is met by the proposition. In this conception, adherence to truth is also what renders the utterance meaningful; so, if no discoverer of penicillin actually existed, the sentence ends up being meaningless. Bertrand Russell (1905) was the first to put forth a separation between truth conditional values of a sentence and its meaning. In his view, a false presupposition made the whole sentence false, but in no way meaningless.

More recent perspectives on presupposition have been deeply influenced by later pragmatic approaches, mainly inaugurated by Stalnaker in the early 70s (Stalnaker 1973, 1974). Stalnaker fostered a conception of presupposition not as a property of sentences but as a propositional attitude of speakers. Stressing the relation of presuppositions to the common ground of conversation, Stalnaker defined presupposition as taken for granted information, that is, information assumed to already hold in the common ground of both interlocutors. This conception is strongly usage-driven, in that it takes presuppositions to reflect *ways of using utterances* in given communicative contexts, rather than semantic properties of utterances. Presuppositions are therefore contents mutually believed to be true by both speaker and receiver and generally expected to belong to their shared common ground prior to conversation. Yet, this is not an essential proviso for using presuppositions in discourse. In fact, since presupposition hinges on particular conversational choices of participants in an interaction, speakers may choose to take some content for granted – and thus presuppose it – even when it is completely new to the addressee. Put another way, presuppositions can be used to *pretend* that some information is in the common ground of the conversation.

A speaker may act as if certain propositions are part of the common background when he knows that they are not. He may want to communicate a proposition indirectly, and do this by presupposing it in such a way that the auditor will be able to infer that it is presupposed. In such a case, a speaker tells his auditor something in part by pretending that his auditor already knows it. The pretense need not be an attempt at deception. It might be tacitly recognized by everyone concerned that this is what is going on, and recognized that everyone else recognizes it. In some

4. The example is mine.

cases, it is just that it would be indiscreet, or insulting, or tedious, or unnecessary blunt, or rhetorically less effective to assert openly a proposition that one wants to communicate. [Stalnaker 1974: 474]

When some new information is presupposed in a sentence, it needs to be *accommodated* (Lewis 1979). The process of accommodation involves adjusting one's common ground with the requirements of the new presupposition being conveyed. The role of presupposition is therefore to indicate that some content ought to be interpreted as shared and thus accepted as true (Sbisà 1999) whether or not it is really familiar to the addressee. This particular status of information is rendered visible by recourse to dedicated classes of triggers that have the function of projecting taken for granted content in discourse. Below, I report some of the common types discussed in the literature (Karttunen 1974; Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1971; Sbisà 2007; Lombardi Vallauri 2009; *inter alia*).

(7) DEFINITE PHRASES

a. *The growing debt* is scuttling international agreements

CHANGE OF STATE VERBS

b. Political parties have not *stopped* bribing people in exchange of votes

ITERATIVE ADVERBS

c. *Also* emerging parties will fall into the temptation of corruption

DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

d. *The bribes that have been lavished by MPs* come from public money

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

e. *When elections were rigged* many people gathered on the streets

FACTIVE PREDICATES⁵

f. It is significant *that European governments did not want to invest more money to revive the economy*

Definite descriptions such as (7a) presuppose the existence of entities of any kind in the world. Here, to be taken for granted is not only the existence of a debt but also that it is growing. Change of state verbs have the function of presupposing a state of affairs that happened before the one explicitly asserted. So, in (7b), if the

5. Somewhere else in the literature (see e.g. Libert 2016), the term *factive* has sometimes been used to refer to presuppositions projected by subordinate clauses. In this work, to avoid terminological confusion I will keep this term distinct from presuppositions triggered by syntactically-dependent propositions. Moreover, some classes of factive predicates – such as *know*, *realize*, etc. – are characterized by weak factivity and their factive interpretation is strongly conditional upon their information structural profile (cf. Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2018 for a more extensive discussion).

sentence overtly states that political parties are bribing people in exchange of votes, it also takes for granted that they were used to doing this also before. Adverbs with iterative meanings generally presuppose that some state of affairs holds for things or individuals other than those for which some state or event is being predicated. In (7c), for example, it is presupposed that other parties fell into the temptation of corruption. Relative clauses presuppose only when defining, namely, when the meaning of the head noun is to be determined by the dependent modifying clause. In (7d), to be presented as already shared information is either the existence of bribes, due to the definiteness of the head noun, and that such bribes have been lavished by MPs. In a similar way, (7e) presupposes that elections were rigged. (7f), by means of the factive predicate *is significant*, conveys as to be taken for granted that European governments did not want to invest more money to revive the economy.

Some types of presuppositional meaning do not originate from the use of specific linguistic triggers, and are for this reason called pragmatic presuppositions (Stalnaker 1974; Berruto 1976). Pragmatic presuppositions generally stem from the appropriateness of an utterance to a given communicative situation; in this sense, they are also sometimes associated to the felicity conditions of a speech act. For instance, in (8) and (9), from Berruto (1976: 145),

(8) What time is it?

(9) I can lend you 1.000 euros

it is respectively presupposed that who utters the question does not know the time and that the interlocutor may know the answer, while in (9) to make the declarative sentence appropriate is the fact that the speaker has 1.000 euros and that the interlocutor is in the need of 1.000 euros. As can be seen, in none of the cases is the presupposition cued by a linguistic trigger proper, since only the contextual appropriateness of the utterances allows deriving their correlative presuppositions. The essentially contextual basis of this category of presupposition makes it somewhat similar to conversational implicatures; however, as it will be better argued in the following section, while the felicity conditions associated with pragmatic presuppositions generally consist in taken for granted assumptions, the felicity condition for the use of an implicature represents the relevant content of a message.

On a priori bases, in terms of sentence decoding, the effect these strategies create is that the content being presupposed is simply not worth being attended to, because either it is completely removed from the sentence or it is coded as background information. Indeed, as rightfully suggested by Sbisà (1999), if presupposed content *ought to* be taken as shared, whoever comes across a presupposition in the linguistic input will simply accept it to be true *as it is*, as she will assume it to already hold in the shared common ground. Further attentional effort devoted to

understanding the presupposed information would therefore be unnecessary because the information does not add anything (properly) new to the conversation. And, interestingly enough, this also happens when a presupposition does not have a real anchor in prior discourse or in the receiver's background knowledge.

Now, the fact that some presupposed content, so to say, "obliges" recipients to accept it as it is – a mechanism which Sbisà (1999) described as the *deontic* interpretation induced by presupposition – also has cooperational bases, in that to be cooperative in the ongoing interaction, the hearer feels urged to accept the presupposition, otherwise she would lead the speaker to retract her utterance, thereby slowing down the communication process. Such an attitude of "blind-acceptance" towards presupposed content in a sentence has been the object of some empirical studies showing how people are on the whole less inclined to challenge presuppositions, whether they are true or false. Elizabeth Loftus (1975) authored one of the earliest psycholinguistic experiments on presupposition interpretation observing the effects that presuppositional wording wielded on the recognition of false and true information in verification questions. Interestingly, in her study, she noticed that presuppositions of false contents about a short movie were often taken by the subjects to be actually true, and most of them did not notice the distortion in the question. In a more recent offline experiment, Amaral & Cummins (2015) presented their subjects with polar questions. Each of them contained a presupposition trigger and was followed by four distinct answer types, some denying the presupposition, some not-denying the presupposition. Most participants massively preferred non-denying answers, regarding denying ones as less felicitous. So, in ordinary interactions, there seems to be an overall resistance to addressing content that is taken for granted by the speaker, which decreases the likelihood of putting it into discussion. Resistance to challenging a presupposition is also motivated by it being non-at issue content, that is, content not conveyed as the informative core of the sentence. In terms of processing, since our cognitive resources are limited and sentence decoding must happen at a fast pace, we are generally bound to allocate the bulk of our processing resources to the content that is presented as *informationally more salient in an utterance*, i.e. the asserted ones. Presupposed contents, whether given or new, are presented as background information, which means that they are less relevant to the subsequent development of the conversation. This is why no further time nor effort should be made to mentally encode content which is only ancillary to the achievement of the speaker's communicative goal. Needless to say, an attentive reader or listener may always manage to detect a false presupposition or a presupposition carrying content she does not know yet, but when it comes to contexts of public communication, where interactions are often essentially monologic, expecting people to address some presupposed content is fairly unlikely. What may happen, though, is that a person "detaches" from a presupposition, that is, she decides not to believe it

to be true, thereby acting as if it does not influence her thought and behavior in any way.⁶ However, to make this happen, one should first understand what a presupposition is and how it can direct attentional processes in sentence comprehension.⁷ We will see this more in detail in the sections dedicated to persuasive uses of implicit communication in both commercial and political propaganda.

Within the relevance theory framework, a recent account of presupposition has been put forth by de Saussure (2013) with the notion of *discursive presuppositions*. He describes discursive presuppositions as “pieces of background knowledge which are not necessary for the recovery of a meaning proper but are basic conditions for relevance and meaningfulness” (de Saussure 2013:180). In his contention, discursive presuppositions are akin to implicatures in that they can be understood as inferences which are necessary to attribute a meaning intention to the speaker who utters her message in a world endowed with specific ontological properties.⁸

1.4.2 Implicature

Another way to make our intentions implicit in a message is by conveying them as *implicature*. This term, introduced by Grice in 1975, indicates any type of inference associated to an utterance (by the speaker) but not directly coded in the literal proposition. Grice’s seminal observations on implicatures moved from the assumption that the contribution of every utterance to an interaction is not only represented by what is explicitly said, but also by what is not said but implied. For example, in (10)

- (10) A: Why don’t you prepare one of your delicious recipes?
B: I have 100 tests to evaluate

As a reply to (10A), (10B) cannot only be taken to mean “I have 100 tests to evaluate”. Indeed, the speaker is also stating that she won’t follow A’s suggestion to prepare a delicious recipe. If this second meaning were not grasped by the receiver,

6. As properly noted by Franke & Rooij (2015), an ideally rational decision maker (that is, the potentially manipulated person) will see through attempts of manipulation.

7. In this connection, Sbisà (2007: 191) rightly remarks that “in many cases, a receiver who has noticed the implicit meaning will most probably comply with it, from a cognitive and a behavioral point of view, without entirely becoming aware of it through that explication process that she might be capable of performing”.

8. From de Saussure (2018: 48): “Ce sont des implicatures d’un certain genre, mais elles partagent avec les présuppositions stricto sensu des propriétés capitales. Plutôt que de les penser comme des pré-conditions d’actes de langage, elles gagnent à être comprises comme des inférences indispensables pour attribuer une intention de sens au locuteur qui produit son énoncé dans un certain monde doté de certaines propriétés ontologiques.”

the speaker's utterance would simply be a pointless contribution to the ongoing exchange. On this account, implicatures thus originate as "repairing" inferences bridging the gap between the literal and non-expressed (but actually intended) meaning of an utterance. So, the only way for utterances like (8B) to perform some useful function in a conversation is their being deemed compliant with a Principle of Cooperation, which Grice formulates in the following terms (Grice 1975: 45):

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Speakers are expected to comply with cooperative communicative behaviors regulating the quantity of the information conveyed in a linguistic message (Maxim of Quantity), its truth value (Maxim of Quality), its relevance to communicative goals (Maxim of Relation) and its manner of presentation (Maxim of Manner). The role of these maxims in everyday conversations is better appreciated when they are "exploited", that is, deliberately violated by speakers to achieve particular communicative effects. I will give an illustration of each case below.

(11) MAXIM OF QUANTITY

A: Where is the dog?

B: Somewhere in one of the gardens of the building

(12) MAXIM OF QUALITY

A: Why do you think Mary is so rude with John?

B: He is only her submissive and faithful dog

(13) MAXIM OF RELATION

A: Are you playing tennis this evening?

B: Mmhh...I'm afraid I'll be in a neverending meeting today...

(14) MAXIM OF MANNER

A: Are you up to an afternoon break at the office bar?

B: Well, actually, I'll have to sit on my chair, open the laptop, switch on the laptop, click on my email box, write an email, send the email and then close the email box.

In (11), despite answering A's question, B is far from precise on the information provided. The use of "somewhere" makes it difficult to understand where exactly the dog is in the garden, and "one of the gardens" in no way hints at a specific garden in which the dog is.⁹ In (12), referring to John as Mary's "submissive and

9. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that the acceptability in challenging the maxim of quantity also hinges on the amount of information expected in the current conversational exchange. In this sense, cases can obviously be found in which sentences like (11B) can

faithful dog” can’t obviously be true, in that John can’t be a dog at all, yet he can be submissive and faithful, just like a dog is. (12B) exemplifies a common case of metaphor, through which two distinct semantic domains are associated due to conceptual similarities. The two concepts shared by both *John* and a *dog* thus are submission and faithfulness. In (13) speaker B is not providing a relevant answer to A’s question, that is, she is not directly saying “No, I’m not playing tennis”; rather, she informs the reader that she will take part in a neverending meeting. What makes B’s utterance acceptable after all is the fact that to satisfy cooperation requirements, the answer must mean “No”. This inference is arrived at by speaker A based on world knowledge assumptions for which it is assumed that taking part in a long meeting may cause delays with subsequent revisions of one’s daily agenda. (14) exemplifies a case in which the speaker chooses an inadequate way to express a single action (i.e. send an email) as he provides plenty of unnecessary details which could be easily left unexpressed because already accepted by the speaker as shared knowledge. In fact, if verbal communication worked as in (14), everyday interactions would be tremendously cumbersome and time-consuming, let alone involving an extra allocation of processing resources to be devoted to elaborating contents that could and should be left unsaid. The cooperative contribution of implicatures, however, does not only reside in their underpinning the functioning of communication when conversational maxims are deliberately or non deliberately flouted, but also in their capability of enriching recipients’ representation of the world. So, in saying “I’m afraid I’ll be in a neverending meeting today” as a reply to “Are you playing tennis this evening?”, the speaker is not only informing the interlocutor that she is not available to play tennis, but she is also letting know the reason why she might not be available, namely that she is going to be in a neverending meeting. Thus, communicating through implicatures help us convey more information than that literally expressed, bringing about effective operations of common ground accrual.

As is known, Grice spends a few lines to point up that Maxims are not “rules” which all speakers are required to observe. Speakers are rather expected to strive to comply with them in order to be cooperative and make a conversation work (Grice 1975: 47–48: “[...] talkers will in general (*ceteris paribus* and in the absence of indications to the contrary) proceed in the manner that these principles prescribe”). Grice calls this type of implicatures conversational because they are “connected with certain general features of discourse” (Grice 1975: 45). Conversational implicatures are thus computed evaluating contextual coordinates of a different sort than those

perfectly work as replies to questions like (11A), as for example in a situation in which Speaker B is worried that the dog might have been kidnapped or escaped outside the building premises, in which case the speaker cannot provide more precise information to the interlocutor on where exactly the dog is.

characterizing the inferencing of conventional implicatures. Conventional implicatures are normally associated to the meaning of a word being used. In Grice's popular example *He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave*, to be implicated is the logical consequence that being brave follows from being English. This inference correlates with the function of the consecutive connector *therefore*, whose meaning could be derived independently of its context of occurrence. For this reason, conventional implicatures are generally more explicit in that a specific linguistic cue is present on the text surface.

Another common type debated in the literature is represented by generalized scalar implicatures whose degree of implicitness is, so to say, between conventional and conversational types. Scalar implicatures originate whenever a greater value can be assumed to derive from a scale in which a lower value has been mentioned. For example, in a sentence like

(15) Jane has got three white skirts

it could undoubtedly be implied that she has even more than three. The assumption that the speaker is being cooperative in saying "three" instead of "four, five or six..." makes the literal interpretation more relevant. It is in fact reasonable to expect that had the speaker meant five or six, she would have said it more directly.

The mainstream literature also distinguishes between generalized and particularized conversational implicatures. While the former can generally be derived in any context, the latter can only be calculated relative to specific contextual coordinates. For example, in (16),

(16) A: Why are you opening all the windows?
B: John will be here in a few minutes

The association between John and the necessity to have all windows open cannot be straightforwardly grasped if one does not know that John is particularly sensitive to stuffy smell. To understand the implicature of B's utterance, the two interlocutors have to share the knowledge that John cannot stand stuffy houses, because the reconstruction of this inference is specifically contingent on this prior assumption, which is why the implicature is called particularized. Conversely, in (17)

(17) John has tried to open all windows

The implicature that he might not have succeeded in doing this can be derived in any context in which the verb *try* is used. Rather than correlating to a particular context of use of the utterance, the implicature here stems from the semantic value of the verb, which directly asserts that X has attempted to do something but also implies – and it does this in any context – that s(he) might have failed to complete the action.

For this reason it is referred to as generalized. Another example is *Fred thinks that Mary will come to the party*, which implies that he is not sure about that. Also scalar implicatures, of which we saw some illustrations above, belong to this category.

Differences between distinct types of presumptive meanings have sometimes been the bulk of heated debates (Simons 2001; Chemla 2009; Cory et al. 2014), some of them seeking to draw a clearer line between, say, presuppositions and implicatures on the basis of experimental verification. In fact, in processing terms, there seem to be differences in the way our cognition deals with content that is taken for granted or implicated in a message. Notably, implicatures seem to impose extra mental activity than the comprehension of presuppositions since presuppositions are taken as background assumptions of an utterance and are, for this reason, reported to be available online before implied content. But other more discourse-based aspects could be considered when accounting for the distinction between these two pragmatic strategies. Implicatures are generally targeted at adding content in the receiver's common ground; more particularly, they represent the speaker's intentional meaning in an interaction, that is, the content which the speaker proposes as her contribution to the ongoing exchange (Sbisà 2007). On the contrary, a presupposition is not uttered to perform this same function; rather, it packages some information as backgrounded and not fulfilling the speaker's communicative goal. As already seen, the receiver will accept some presupposed content as true, whether or not this already holds in her common ground.

Another relevant difference concerns the relation these two presumptive meanings bear on logical negation. It is fairly well-established that presupposition resists negation, which means that in a sentence containing a presupposition, only the non-presupposed, i.e. asserted, part is negated, as shown in (18) below.

- (18) a. John has not *stopped smoking*
 b. It is not true that *Mary's brother* went to college
 c. It is not true that *when Mark left Norah*, they had bought a house together

In (18a) to be negated is not that John used to smoke before – which is in fact still presupposed – but the fact that he has presently given up his vice. In the same vein, in (18b) the existence of Mary's brother does not fall within the scope of the negative operator, which instead affects the meaning of the remaining predicate (...*go to college*). Finally, in (18c), what is denied is the fact that Mark and Norah had bought a house together and not the fact that they split up. Now, this behavior of presupposition is hardly ever observed in implicatures. Consider the following exchange.

- (19) A: Could you help me with my algebra exercises?
 B1: Well, I was so terrible at maths at school...
 B2: Well, I was *not* so terrible at maths at school...

It is quite easy to notice that while uttering B1 would legitimate the implicature that the speaker does not feel confident helping her interlocutor with algebra exercises, B2 definitely hints at the opposite interpretation. Similarly, in (20)

- (20) A: Are you joining the party tonight?
 B1: Actually, I have to finish my report...
 B2: Actually, I *don't* have to finish my report...

the fact that B has to finish her report allows deriving the implicature that she will not be able to join the party. Conversely, in denying the same state of affairs, the inference one would draw is that B may be in the condition to go.

So, not only does negation affect the meaning of the literal message, but also that of the implied one.¹⁰ In this sense, the response of implicatures to negation pretty much resembles that of asserted contents in a sentence, compared to presupposed ones. Récanati (1987) indeed describes implicatures derived from indirect speech acts as “indirect assertions”. Their assertiveness, though, does not concern their literal coding in a message, but *the speaker’s commitment to their truth*. In fact, in both overt assertions and implied propositions, the speaker is responsible for the truth stated. The sole difference between the two conditions is that with assertions the truth the speaker commits to is entirely available on surface structure, while with implicatures, it must be calculated via extra inferential mechanisms. On the reception side, then, while presupposition is not interpreted as the speaker’s informative contribution to a conversation, an implicature is indeed the actual reason why an utterance is produced. It must be pointed up, though, that in some pragmatic approaches linguistic expressions which have been categorized as implicatural, have been recast as presuppositional somewhere else. This is the case of focusing adverbs such as *also* and its translation in other languages. As for the Italian *anche* (“also”), Bianchi (2003) describes it as a conventional implicature, while Sbisà (2007) classifies it as a presupposition, due to its anaphorical nature (Van der Sandt 1992). In fact, a sentence containing *anche* or *also* generally refers to some previous antecedent in discourse. If I say, *Mary also likes cooking* it is to be assumed, based on the additive meaning of the adverb, that she likes doing something else besides cooking. By the same token, a sentence like *John plays the piano too* takes as shared information that someone else plays the piano. The fact that this adverb sends back

10. It should be highlighted that these interpretations especially hold if no other suspending statement is added to the utterances B1 and B2. In fact, if both utterances were rephrased as

- *Well I was so terrible at maths at school, but I can try*
- *Well, I was not so terrible at maths at school, but I won't risk*

their corresponding implicatures are suspended.

to an expected antecedent in prior discourse is at the basis of its presuppositional nature. Implicatures, on the contrary, do not usually recall contents already present in the universe of discourse, unless a repetition is intended to emphasize a meaning being negotiated. In most cases, they are targeted at adding novel information to the receiver's current model of the discourse context.

Le implicature mettono a disposizione del ricevente senso aggiuntivo o correttivo, ma non sono qualcosa la cui verità è data per scontata: può darsi che di fatto gli interlocutori le assumano come vere, ma in linea di principio hanno il medesimo statuto di discutibilità di quanto risulta detto esplicitamente. (Sbisà 2007: 126)¹¹

1.4.3 Topicalization

Moving to another aspect of the micropragmatic level of utterances, I will now zoom in on the phenomenon of topicalization and its relation to manipulative language.

The term topic and topicalization has received several definitions in information structure studies, and still its status in linguistic theory leaves open many pending questions. From the seminal views of the Prague School tradition – in which topic or *theme* was outlined as the least communicatively dynamic part of a sentence, and thus as weakly contributing to the development of conversation – this information unit has subsequently been identified with what the sentence is about (Reinhart 1982), with the point of departure of a message (Mathesius 1939; Halliday 1985), with the most continuous element in an utterance (Givón 1983), with a (mental) file card which is filled up with new propositions (comments) (Heim 1982), and, in more recent functional views mainly developed within the Italian tradition of studies, with the semantic or conceptual basis of a sentence facilitating the decoding of its illocutionary force, carried by the focus (Cresti 2000; Lombardi Vallauri 2009). This latter definition is less widespread beyond the borders of Italian research on information structure, yet, on a closer look, it is probably one of the most effective. But, in what way and to what extent does topic relate to the grammaticalization of the illocutionary force of a sentence? Before looking into this in more detail, I will first zoom in on the strategies by which some information can be topicalized in a sentence.

11. [Eng. “Implicatures usually introduce additional or corrective content into the recipient’s mind, but their truth is not taken for granted by the speaker. It could be that interlocutors believe them to be true, but, as a rule of thumb, they are endowed with the same degree of challengeability as explicitly conveyed content.”]

Syntactically, constituents can be topicalized by simply preposing them in an utterance, as shown in (21).

- (21) A: It's been a long time since I saw you last. So, what's new?
 B: Well, my husband moved to Ireland to start a new job

In terms of activation states (Chafe 1976), B's reply to A is an all-new utterance, in that none of the information items contained in it has actually been introduced in prior discourse. Nonetheless, the sentence gives an overall impression of conveying an informational gradient from left to right, so that the further to the right you go, the greater the informativity of the contents you come across. This characterization does not have much to do with the incremental nature of sentence processing, but rather with the need of achieving an optimal balance in the distribution of processing resources, which are not many and should be allocated so as to allow retaining the most informationally salient part(s) of a sentence.

On the prosodic level, topic is often, though not always, identified by less prominent intonation. I said "often, though, not always" because, as contented below, topics may also show different phonological contours depending on their role in discourse (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007). In (22B), the focused unit is clearly distinguished from the topical one through a more prominent accentual peak on the former.

- (22) A: What did you buy at the shopping center?
 B: I bought a new CHAIR

As a focus conveying novel information, CHAIR is prosodically more prominent than the other constituents of the sentence.

In most European languages, prosodic prominence specifically marks focus when it is narrowed to single words or phrases. In fact, even when an entire predicate or sentence is focalized, accentual peaks can hardly be found on more than one constituent (Masia 2020). Through mechanisms of projection (Selkirk 1985), focus interpretation is then extended to sentence units surrounding the accented one based on how the sentence fits the preceding discourse. When prosody marks a narrow focus, as in (20B), the remaining sentence units are usually realized as intonationally flat, and are therefore interpreted as topical.

In some languages, topics are clearly identified by dedicated linguistic structures. An extensively studied phenomenon in the Romance linguistic area is the well-known Clitic-left dislocation (Cinque 1977). These dislocation types consist in extrapositions of constituents which are then resumed by clitic pronouns in the sentence. Here are some examples from different Romance languages:

- (23) a. *Il cappello*_i, *l*'_i ho lasciato a casa (Italian)
 b. *A Juan*_i, *le*_i ví ayer (Spanish)
 c. *Ce livre*_i, *je* *l*'_i ai lu beaucoup de fois (French)

In each of these cases, the syntactic and semantic function of the topic is replicated in the sentence by means of a proform.

We have seen before that topic and focus have also been couched in terms of how they contribute to the grammaticalization of the illocutionary force of the sentence. Following Austin (Austin 1962), I refer here to illocutionary force as the purpose for which an utterance is produced in a given context. Cresti proposes to view this pragmatic meaning to be conveyed by the focus unit while topic would serve as the field for the force's application (Cresti 2018: 48). On this account, while focus carries hints as to whether an utterance is an assertion, a question, an order, etc., topic would "not allow any pragmatic assignment" of this sort (Cresti 2018: 49). Topic, in this sense, is the information unit that does not contribute to the encoding of the illocutionary force of a sentence and, due to this, it does not express the speaker's communicative goal. If we consider the three sentences below, it is easy to notice that illocutionary variations are mainly expressed in the focus or comment unit, and not in the topic.

- (24) (ASSERTION)
- a. [As for this shirt]_{TOPIC}, [my sister gave it to me for my birthday]_{COMMENT/FOCUS}
- (ORDER)
- a. [As for this shirt]_{TOPIC}, [don't touch it at all]_{COMMENT/FOCUS}
- (QUESTION)
- c. [As for this shirt]_{TOPIC}, [would you mind ironing it for me?]_{COMMENT/FOCUS}

As can be easily deduced, without the subsequent focal clause, it would not be possible to assess whether the topic phrase is part of an assertion, an order or a question. Focus is thus what defines what a sentence is uttered for and what goal the speaker wants to achieve in an interaction. This outline of information structure units allows going far beyond the peculiar linguistic features of topic (or focus) realization, as it emphasizes the particular contribution that an information unit makes to determining the illocutionary force of a sentence as well as the speaker's purpose in the communicative task at hand.

A crucial notion when describing informational hierarchies of utterances is the concept of *packaging*, already mentioned earlier in this chapter and which Chafe (1976: 28) put in the following terms:

I have been using the term packaging to refer to the kind of phenomena at issue here, with the idea that they have to do primarily with how the message is sent and only secondarily with the message itself, just as the packaging of toothpaste can affect sales in partial independence of the quality of the toothpaste inside.

Applied to information structure, packaging thus refers to the linguistic clothing of information, irrespective of its givenness or newness status in the sentence. In this

sense, the notions of topic, focus, theme, rheme, background, foreground, etc., as well as of presupposition and assertion, should rather be regarded as inhering in the packaging level of utterances (Masia 2017a), while the fact that some content is old, given or new is only a matter of retrievability from prior discourse and from the receiver's short- and long-term memory. This means that even old-fashioned definitions like "topic is the given idea of a sentence and focus the new one" can well be overcome by the assumption that there is no one-to-one relation between the given-new status of some information and its packaging as topic or focus. Yet, a recurrent association between topic and given information, on the one hand, and between focus and new information, on the other, cannot be denied, given that speakers' purpose in conversation is generally to enhance the receiver's current representation of the discourse model with novel and unshared contents about other more familiar entities in her common ground.

1.4.4 Vagueness

The fourth phenomenon I would like to tackle in this work and whose manipulative effects are still underexplored is *vagueness*. Before studying it as a semantic feature, vagueness should be first addressed as a semiotic property of the linguistic code. Some (Machetti 2011) consider vagueness as a powerful means to struggle with the "inexpressible" conceptual matter in verbal communication. Extant perspectives do not always converge on the way they deal with vagueness in language: in being a semantic property of all languages, it is also differently characterized depending on the semantic framework adopted. The mainstream literature (Keefe 2000; Gaio 2010; Machetti 2011; Paganini 2011; Williamson 1994) reports at least four distinct theories of vagueness, each emphasizing a specific source of its manifestation in verbal language.

Semantic theories stress the relation between language and reality and argue that it is this particular relation that is vague (Keefe 2000).

Epistemic theories assume vagueness to be conditional upon limits of knowledge, that is, upon our capabilities of understanding the world (Williamson 1994).

Ontological theories portray vagueness as a property of things that are in the world; so, it is the non-completely defined boundaries of things which makes it difficult to refer to them in a precise way (Varzi 2001).

Finally, *contextual* theories conceive vagueness of a term as contingent upon the context in which the term is applied (Shapiro & Snyder 2015).

Following a definition suggested by De Mauro (1982: 99):

un'espressione è vaga quando non possiamo decidere in base a considerazioni formali se, noto il referente e nota l'espressione, essa è applicabile sempre o non è applicabile mai al referente.¹²

This definition of vagueness is the one I will adopt in the remainder of this work. I will therefore regard as vague any term for which it cannot be decided to which degree it can be applied to a specific entity or portion of reality.

In language use, vagueness can concern any linguistic category, from adjectives ('tall', 'young', 'red', etc.) to adverbs ('rapidly', 'clearly', etc.), from nouns ('mountain', 'adult', 'baby', etc.) to singular terms ('Everest', 'Sahara', etc.) (Gaio 2010). So, for adjectives such as *tall*, it is never all the way certain what characteristics a person should be endowed with to be defined "tall". In the same vein, it is never completely determined how old a person should be to be defined "young" or "baby". Philosophical and linguistic reflection on vagueness often recalls the well known Sorite's paradox (also known as "the paradox of the heap"), according to which it is difficult to assess how many grains of sand are necessary to form a heap. And, also, if I remove one or two grains from the heap, can it still be called a "heap"? The implications of this paradox could well be extended to any other predicate possibly characterized by vague reference.

One reason why vagueness is so pervasive in language should also be put down to our conceptualization of experience. As a matter of fact, most of the entities that are in the world are generally retained in our mind in the form of categories and, since categories do not always have pre-defined and clearly detectable clear-cut boundaries (Rosch 1978) or unambiguous meanings (semantic meaning is under-specified), their fuzziness is very often reflected in both semantic and structural properties of language.

In more recent contention, vagueness has also been described as stemming from syntactic properties of sentences (Danler 2005). This is often the case of incomplete verb valency constructions which make the identification of verbal arguments less straightforward. For example, passive sentences like (25) and (26), where no agent role is made explicit, leave underdetermined who found the dog and who shot the two thieves (cf. Oswald et al 2016 for the interpretive implications of this strategy).

(25) A dog was found near the main station

(26) Two thieves were shot after getting out of a jewelry store

12. Eng. "An expression is vague whenever we cannot decide – on the basis of formal considerations – if, being both the referent and the expression known, it is always or never applicable to the referent."

But also nominalizations can somehow “freeze” the argument structure of a verb causing the omission of some arguments, more often agentive ones (Billig 2008).

- (27) The construction of the building was saluted with great enthusiasm by the local people

Here the deverbal noun *construction* leaves unexpressed who constructed the building. In such a case, the agent of the *construction*-process can be said to be vague should the recipient fail to retrieve it from the overall linguistic or extra-linguistic context. The manifestation of vagueness as engendered by de-verbal nominalizations is of a slightly different nature than that observed for adjectives. We have said before that a vague adjective is one for which it cannot be established to which extent it can be applied to a specific referent. Here, instead, vagueness is determined by the impossibility (depending on the context and on the existing background knowledge of the receiver) to univocally reconstruct a given participant in the mentioned process. Yet, it must also be highlighted that the use of syntactic structures like these is often justified by an overall retrievability of the missing argument from the general context of conversation. But, in other contexts, such as political discourse, the semantic slots left empty by omitted verb arguments cannot always be altogether filled by receivers (because they may lack appropriate knowledge to complete the missing information), with the result that the expression remains irreversibly vague and doubtful, and this makes it more manipulative because it induces receivers to form totally arbitrary representations of some contents which often fail to adhere to the actual truth. By way of illustration, I will report a few occurrences extracted from the *IMPAQTS* corpus of Italian political speeches gathered by the University of Roma Tre and the University of Florence.¹³

- (28) Evidentemente gli italiani sono molto più avanti rispetto a **qualche fine analista politico che riempie di inchiostro le pagine di alcuni quotidiani.**

[MSAL19-C1]

‘Apparently, the Italians are far ahead of some refined political analyst who fills up with ink pages of some newspapers’.

Through the use of the indefinite adjective *qualche* (“some”), in (28) Matteo Salvini (leader of the League party) vaguely refers to some political analyst who writes on newspapers about unreliable facts only out of the desire to make her voice heard against the League. In such a case, if no prior knowledge is shared by the receiver, the reconstruction of such reference gets all the way hampered.

Sometimes, also the use of generic plurals with non-overtly expressed subjects may give rise to vague interpretations, as exemplified in (29).

13. More of this corpus will be said in Chapter 6.

- (29) **Hanno fatto passare** il principio che, per governare, era necessario non rispettare i programmi e pazienza per i cittadini. [LDMA18-T1]
 ‘They have spread the principle according to which, in order to rule, it was necessary to respect the programs while citizens had to be patient.’

To be left vague, here, is reference to the person who spread the principle that, in order to rule, the government has to respect the programs; on the other hand, citizens have to be patient. Finally, in (30) the use of an impersonal subject pronoun *si* (a recurrent construction in many Romance languages) does not allow understanding who prevented a real European union and who wants to exclude Spain from this union.¹⁴

- (30) **Invece ad Atene si è impedita questa vera unità europea, si vogliono escludere nazioni come la Spagna.** [SPER83-T1]
 ‘Instead, in Athens, a real European union has been hampered, some are willing to exclude nations like Spain.’

We will see in Chapter 5 how constructions like these are dealt with in interlinguistic translation and in interpreting, and what problems they pose to the rendering of a target text.

Another common phenomenon that can be added to the set of devices implicit communication relies on is the well-known strawman fallacy, namely a kind of argumentative move through which a person A takes on the argument of a person B and distorts it or rephrases it in a more exaggerate way. Such a discursive move generally leads to a misrepresentation of an idea or a proposition, as it happens in (31).

- (31) Speaker A: I believe that ignorance can cause violence
 Speaker B: So, you think that uneducated people are a threat to a peaceful society?

14. In Italian, sentences with impersonal subjects often take the form of reduced passive constructions; yet, differently from real passive structures, they do not allow the overt expression of an agent in their syntactic domain.

- a. *È stata acquistata una nuova area edificabile dal Comune*
 [A new building area has been purchased by the City]
 b. *Si è acquistata una nuova area edificabile *dal Comune*

This hinges on the fact that, while in (a) the agent has been removed from its original subject position, in (b) this position is already occupied by the impersonal pronoun *si*, which is also assigned an agentive argument role, but whose reference is semantically indefinite. Recovering an agentive participant by means of a prepositional phrase would thus eventuate in a double realization of a single argument.

Here, Speaker B is misrepresenting Speaker A's point and implicitly attributes such misrepresentation to Speaker A, who probably did not want to particularly address uneducated people, but simply to people who ignore the law. This undue attribution comes about surreptitiously and, often, as a form of contrast or rejection of a speaker's stance. This argumentative strategy is particularly diffuse in political discourse; yet, as it would require being tackled more exhaustively, I will leave it pending in the wait of a more extensive collection of relevant data (for other recent contention on the subject, cf. Hamblin 1970 and de Saussure 2018, among others).

1.5 Content commitment and discourse commitment

Earlier in this chapter I have introduced the notion of *packaging*, defined by Chafe (1976) as the external appearance of some information, or, metaphorically, as its container. I have also suggested to view information structure as well as other discourse strategies as strongly inhering in this level of utterances' informational configurations. To some extent, this correlates with the idea that when we classify some content as new, given or old, we are not properly profiling its information structure in the sentence. Rather, we are establishing states of knowledge of speakers and receivers with respect to some exchanged information; accordingly, we also define degrees of commitment to the truth of information itself. For the purpose of the forthcoming discussion and following the seminal account proposed by Hamblin (1971), an individual is said to *commit* to a proposition P when she considers that P is true.¹⁵ Information structure categories such as topic, focus, presupposition and assertion thus represent ways with which speakers want to display commitment degrees and make certain knowledge states understood by receivers. So, one thing is knowledge speakers actually commit to and believe to be true, one thing is how they want to manifest such commitment and belief states in an interaction. I will roughly refer to these two levels of commitment as *content commitment* and *discourse commitment*. Content commitment is a more internal perspective of the speaker towards a proposition, what she thinks, her personal attitude towards some information; by contrast, discourse commitment is an outward manifestation of the speaker's content commitment (i.e. internal attitude to knowledge) by means of different packaging criteria of information. In this sense, receivers have access to speakers' real commitment states only through the help of packaging signals. But these signals may sometimes be misleading in that a speaker may show to strongly

15. More recently, Morency et al. (2008: 200–201) put forth an account of commitment hinging on speech acts performances. Notably, within this framework “commitment relates to what a speaker can be expected to comply with when uttering a proposition”.

commit to some information when in fact she has no adequate evidence to endorse its truth. By way of illustration, if I utter the sentence in (32)

(32) It is raining

without knowing whether or not it is raining, or without actually believing that it might be raining, I am misusing the properties of an assertive speech act (Searle 1969). In fact, if assertion carries the pragmatic meaning that the speaker commits to the truth of a statement, the receiver is legitimized to infer that the speaker indeed believes the stated proposition to be true, no matter what her internal commitment state actually is. So, in conversation, discourse commitment plays a more decisive role than content commitment in shaping the receiver's mental representations of a discourse model, and it is far more impacting in contexts of manipulative communication. Let us further consider Example (33).

(33) A: Did the child watch TV and play with the tablet?
B: Actually, he only watched TV

Now, besides committing to the truth that 'the child watched TV', speaker B is also committing to the corrective function that that proposition has in the discourse (she is therefore showing discourse commitment, besides content commitment, to the proposition). Put another way, B is committed to re-shaping the set of prior assumptions held by speaker A so as to induce A to exclude any possible world in which the child both watched TV and played with the tablet, thus only complying with a world in which he watched TV and did nothing else.

One may rightfully object to the need of distinguishing between these two levels of epistemic commitment in communication. Why not assume that speakers simply show stronger commitment to information whose truth they can endorse and weaker commitment to contents that are already shared or for which they lack adequate evidence? If we looked at some contexts of language use, we would understand that a one-to-one mapping between the actual commitment of the speaker (content commitment) and the one she puts on display in conversation (discourse commitment) through different packaging strategies does not always obtain. In Chapter 4, I will seek to argue that this is often the case of propagandistic discourse and, particularly, of political speech in which packaging strategies are often chosen by politicians according to the degree of challengeability and reliability of the contents to be conveyed. The trends that will be discussed corroborate the view that information structure can be used, more or less strategically, to induce assumptions of commitment degrees, namely those externally shown, which can be largely independent from internal (real) commitment states. This function of information packaging is what makes it a potentially dangerous manipulative device, if one fails to grasp how it contributes to and may direct sentence comprehension.

1.6 Evolutionary perspectives

Within current philosophical and linguistic approaches, the debate around how implicit communication evolved and how it became manipulative is still vivid among scholars (Reboul 2011; Coolidge & Wynn 2012; Lombardi Vallauri 2016; Masia 2017c). By and large, this discussion revolved around the same considerations underlying more general hypotheses on the evolution of language. Conjecturing on how language became manipulative first of all compels us to unravel why and how *we* became manipulative as social beings (Pinker et al. 2008; Sperber et al. 2010). Inquiring this second aspect of our nature poses questions which go well beyond the boundaries of linguistics, as they more relevantly inhere in social and cognitive psychology. Krebs & Dawkins (1984), who sought to account for the social and behavioral underpinnings of manipulation on evolutionary bases, regard manipulation as a driving factor in much human reasoning activity. More precisely, they contend that humans' reasoning abilities have mainly evolved to allow humans to "come to collective decisions by persuading one another that a given course of action is better than another (from Reboul 2011: 4).¹⁶ In their view, manipulation involves "actively changing the victim's behavior" (Krebs & Dawkins 1984: 383), which is what they believe communication has pre-eminently evolved for. It must be underlined that their notion of manipulation does not necessarily correlate with something negative (as we are usually accustomed to think). As a matter of fact, they put forth a distinction between hostile and non-hostile manipulation (also discussed in Saussure & Schulz (2005)). Hostile manipulation comes about whenever the communicator wants to induce a behavior in the addressee that is harmful for him/her. Conversely, with non-hostile manipulation, the induced behavior can be either neutral or beneficial to the addressee. A fair amount of cases and examples that will be discussed in this volume epitomize manifestations of potentially hostile manipulation, as is often the case of political propaganda or the use of discourse strategies that may distort the representation of information in newspaper articles. In these cases, it is difficult to assess the extent to which manipulative communicative strategies can be seen as beneficial, given that they often end up involving the transmission of ideological contents as well as of subjective points of view of the speaker or writer. But everyday interactions also offer nice examples of non-hostile manipulation, as in mother-child dialogues in which the mother tries to convince her child to eat vegetables because they are good for his health. She may therefore opt for tactics like rewarding the child with something he deeply longs for, if he finishes eating all the vegetables. The intention of the mother is clearly not to fulfil a personal wish but to do the good of the child.

16. See also Pinker et al. (2008) for a similar account.

Now, if our nature as manipulators clearly has behavioral roots, the way we practise it in our everyday interactions cannot all the way do without language, and that is when the more linguistic part of the debate started showing up. Because of its intricate psychological underpinnings and the role played by Theory of Mind abilities¹⁷ in its working, implicit communication has eventually gained an important role in the debate. Reboul (2011), for example, conceives manipulation as the main reason why implicit communication emerged as a unique human capacity, its function being the concealment of a communicator's manipulative intentions.

Implicit communication evolved to facilitate manipulation by allowing communicators to hide their (manipulative) intentions. (Reboul 2011: 10)

She also argues that implicitness proves to be an extremely adaptive feature in achieving manipulative intents, owing to the fact that it reduces the likelihood of a manipulative intent being detected by the addressee. This is also made possible by the fact that implicit language takes advantage of humans' poor reasoning performances. In other words, the way we think and reason is often geared towards settling for good enough rather than optimal solutions (I will come back to this point in Chapter Four).

The idea that implicit communication might have raised for the sole purpose of attaining and facilitating manipulative intents leaves many questions open as to why the strategies of implicit communication are the way they are, why they should be more adaptive than other strategies. Also, why are they so diversified, despite being all devoted to fulfilling common manipulative goals? If we look at the numerous functions presupposition, implicature, topic and vagueness perform in discourse, it is difficult to think that they have emerged only to facilitate manipulative communicative moves in interactions among conspecifics. It must be pointed out, though, that Reboul's account mainly concerned implicatures, yet a few considerations are worth making also for the other types of implicit meaning.

Drawing on Stalnaker (1973, 1974), we have defined presupposition as information to be taken for granted by both speaker and receiver up to a certain point in the conversation. This is its widely accepted status in discourse, but what does this status involve in terms of communicative and processing effectiveness? As mentioned earlier, the taken-for-granted status of presupposition is not related to the content it encodes but to how such content is packaged. In fact, we have seen that presuppositions can convey new contents which need to be accommodated in order for communication to further on. So, a presupposition *induces* the effect of

17. Theory of Mind is an ability through which we "read" and interpret mental states of other individuals (Frith & Frith 2005) and is at the basis of our capacity to regulate inferential processes in interactions.

taking some content for granted, whatever its status in the addressee's mind. As it can be deduced, this property is particularly useful to streamlining the structure of conversation in that it allows compacting more items of new information in a single sentence. If this were not the case, we would be compelled to overtly assert every new content uttered in a message, with a consequent increase of the structural complexity of every interactional turn. Moreover, this taken-for-granted status comes with the instruction to process presupposed contents in a different way than asserted ones, that is, with less attention (this will become clearer in Chapter Two). In so doing, the speaker can save part of her cognitive energies and devote them to more relevant contents (Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014; Masia 2017a). Due to the overall small amount of resources we can rely on for each processing task (Sweller 2003), this property of presupposition is particularly advantageous for effective sentence processing. Another primary function of presupposition is to ensure text cohesion by anaphorically referring to previously introduced contents in discourse, or to contents already known by the addressee. So, connexity, optimization and economy are three important benefits of presupposition use in communication, which expectably predate its manipulative function.

As for implicature, we have seen that it can be used to avoid directness when it risks to be impolite. But it also enriches the addressee's representation of the world. In the dialogue in (34)

- (34) A: Will you buy your dream car?
 B: My boss has just fired me

B is not communicating to A that she will probably not buy her dream car, but she is also explaining why. Exploiting the Maxim of Relation, B has the advantage of providing A with two items of information at the expense of a single act of utterance. This is clearly a beneficial use of implicatures, which is made possible by (a) the Cooperation Principle, which is at play in all our interactions, and (b) by the role of relevance assumptions (Sperber & Wilson 1986), which allow selecting the inferences which are more relevant to the communicative task at hand.

The status of topic in discourse is not so different than that described for presupposition, with the only proviso that topic instructs to process some content as already given (or active) in the linguistic context. As I said for presupposition, also the given-state of some content is not related to its (non)availability in discourse, but is hinted by the packaging features of topic itself. Put another way, topic instructs to treat some information as given, no matter if it is actually given or new. In this sense, similarly to presupposition, topic allows combining more new ideas at utterance time and induces to process the content it encodes less attentively. Moreover, like presupposition, it performs an anaphorical function, because it often – though not always – correlates with already active contents in discourse. In this function,

topic (and focus) works as a regulatory unit of the communicative dynamism of the discourse, in that it facilitates the differentiation between given and new contents in a message (i.e. the hearer will expect given contents to receive topic packaging and new contents to receive focus packaging). In time, this property turned out to be particularly useful in orality, where the recognition of some contents as given and others as new had to happen at a fast pace, owing to the immediate and ephemeral nature of oral communication (Masia 2017a).

As hinted at in Section 1.3.4, vagueness is an intrinsically semiotic property of our linguistic code, and its presence in all natural languages is the direct consequence of the languages being arbitrary. We have seen that different semantic theories seek to account for the reason why we use vague language in our conversations. Being manipulative is clearly one of these, but its existence rests on more primary aspects. In line with epistemological accounts, Sorensen (1991) suggests to view vagueness as hanging on a kind of ignorance, in that the indeterminacy associated with a vague expression stems from our inability to determine its exact extension. Varzi (2003) contends that in some cases we feel confident in speaking vaguely because what we say is taken as true “under all admissible interpretations of our words, and so we do not bother being more precise”. But vagueness also has clear-cut psychological underpinnings, and precisely reflects the fluid judgmental spreadings involved in human categorization (Varzi 2003). Conceptual categories being not discreet, we may act with some judgmental inertia in tracing the boundaries between categories. Yet, when we fail to be precise in referring to a concept, vagueness also helps us keeping a satisfying level of expressiveness in our language since it provides substitute concepts for referential gaps. On the reception side, vagueness is probably less adaptive in that it compels the addressee to rely on contextual meaning to associate a more definite referent to the vague term; but it compensates the referential and semantic incompleteness of our sentences in some circumstances.

All this induces to think at these implicit strategies as having emerged in human language for more basic reasons than simply manipulating others. What human beings may possibly have done is exploit the properties of these strategies to manipulate in given interactional contexts. Put another way, the function and use of these strategies may have been *exapted* (Gould & Vrba 1982) by speakers to achieve manipulative aims. In evolutionary terms, their manipulative use could be classified as a “spandrel” of their functions in everyday interactions.¹⁸ They are thus not intrinsically manipulative but can be used in a manipulative way. So, it is the context and the speaker’s intention that determines how manipulative a presupposition,

18. The idea that deception and manipulation are derived functions of language is also discussed in Oesch (2016).

an implicature, a topic or a vague expression is. Acquisitional evidence (Baker & Greenfield 1988) on the development of topic-focus and presupposition-assertion in child language backs up children's likelihood of using topic and presupposition only to convey given and old contents at an early stage (i.e. at the moment two-word sentences start to appear), and only later on do they associate the two units to new information as well. This means that the use of presuppositions to convey contents which are not known in advance by the addressee, and as potentially manipulative, is a belated linguistic capacity, and we can assume this pattern to also have some phylogenetic grounds. In this sense, implicit communication is an adaptive tool for manipulating people because it first makes interactions adaptive and effective as it ensures an optimal balance between production and reception needs. On the whole, this corroborates the importance of becoming familiar with the use and functions implicit communication strategies have in ordinary conversations in order to be able to deal with and gain command of their manipulative impact in some usage contexts.

Other evolutionary perspectives have stressed the role of socio-interactional pressures in early linguistic communities, or in what Givón (2002) called *societies of intimates*. Societies of intimates are described by Givón as small-scale communities characterized by a rather high cultural homogeneity and stability which also determines an equally high informational homogeneity and stability. He remarks that

when all members of the social group know each other intimately, when the terrain is stable and well-known to everybody, and when the culture is time-stable and cultural diversity is minimal, then the bulk of relevant generic knowledge – the conceptual semantic map of the physical, social and mental universe – is equally shared by all group members and requires no elaboration. In the intimate social unit, day-to-day specific episodic information is also largely shared, by virtue of the ever-shared immediate situation. The communication system that springs out of such social ecology is neigh predictable. (Givón 2002: 301)

Coolidge & Wynn (2012: 217) maintain that in communicative ecologies like these, “social hierarchies are reduced to a minimum, and interactions between members typically come about on a peer-to-peer scale”. In such realities, the use of indirect expressive forms was in part justified by the large amount of information already shared by interactants (Tomasello 2008), but also and more importantly by the potentially harmful effects that the use of direct communication might have in interpersonal interactions. This particularly holds in cases of direct criticism or other types of content that may risk to raise the addressee's critical reaction. Since in small-scale societal structures information spreads more rapidly, if it is potentially harmful for a member's reputation, it may resound in the entire speech community, thus jeopardizing the overall integrity of social bonds. In this scenario, implicit

communication could have the double beneficial effect of attenuating the impact of a linguistic message (*recipient-oriented advantage*) and of hiding its epistemic source (*speaker-oriented advantage*). So, the primary utility of implicit language could be to ensure effective communications when information was already shared among members, and subserve “politeness” purposes when some information risked to be face-threatening (Goffman 1981) for another interlocutor. As also underlined by Grottanelli Vinigi (1966: 323), the fact that in conditions of demographic exiguity an individual is known by everybody in the group, his/her behavior and actions can hardly elude other members’ vigilance. This means that if a speaker turns out to be an unreliable source of information, her socio-interactional status is more easily subject to other members’ challenging behavior (Masia 2017c: 145–146). Of course, this does not mean that the conveyance of new information should be banned (as this would contravene the fundamental function of communication, that is, to exchange new contents), but that speakers in small-scale societies may be more prone to epistemically detach from its truth. In time, as human communities grew, this function of implicit communication remained as a “selected trait” in the language system. So, in today’s bigger societies implicit language can be resorted to when the transaction of dubitable and possibly challengeable contents is at stake. And, even if the large-scale structure of contemporary societies is likely to make people “strangers” to one another, the need of preserving one’s own reputation in the opinion of others is a constant feature of our everyday interactions, and an even more essential feature of persuasive and deceptive communication.

On balance, in time we learned to exploit the benefits and adaptive aspects of implicit language to engage in manipulative interactions. From primary uses mainly targeted at regulating the flow of common and uncommon knowledge as well as politeness constraints, implicit communication eventually became a useful linguistic endowment to persuade and deceive people, thereby subtly controlling their mind and behavior.

1.7 Manipulation and persuasion

The concept of manipulation is in some cases used as coterminous with the concept of persuasion. However, it is worth recalling that they designate distinctive argumentative processes, one more positive in its goal, the other more negative.

At the time of Aristotle, persuasion was conceived as an argumentative practice aimed at attaining the truth. Aristotle himself accused the Sophists of not caring about truth but only about deceiving people to accept “a truth” which had not been arrived at through constructive and intersubjective dialogue. Discussion and dispute were unavoidable steps in this attempt. The “art of persuasion”, in this

sense, has been generally deemed as more ethical and prosocial than the “art of manipulation”. By and large, through the persuasive method, an idea is put forth with vivid supporting evidence, which makes a person free to choose whether to accept it or not. As noted by Piattelli Palmarini (1995: 12), being persuasive communicators amounts to induce the addressee to understand new relevance relations between argumentative blocks. A persuasive intention thus does not hide from the interlocutor the process by which some truth is conveyed; such process is instead made explicit and directly assessable. Put another way, persuasive argumentative moves exploit the conscious awareness of the interlocutor to transfer convictions and beliefs in her mind. Manipulation is portrayed by many as the *perversion* of persuasion, in that it is always concerned with truth, but in a deceitful way. And deceit is very often the outcome of implicit language practices because they better exploit the unconscious state of the receiver.

The most striking differences between persuasion and manipulation can therefore be boiled down to the following crucial aspects:

- a. Manipulation does not view others with *equality* (it rests on mechanisms of power abuse), while persuasion views other interactants on a par.
- b. Manipulation *distorts or withholds* the truth, while persuasion proffers it in the form of overtly available content.
- c. Manipulation is *coercive* in that it imposes truth, thereby reducing (or all the way) removing free choice; persuasion, on the contrary, may influence but never through force.

Dropped in the context of the language phenomena dealt with in this volume, it could be surmised that persuasion would opt for strategies such as (35), whereas manipulation would fall back on communicative moves like (36).

- (35) This leftist government is not doing that much to tackle the COVID-19 emergency in Italy. Instead, the Right wing can do much more and much better.
- (36) The Right wing can do much more and much better to tackle the COVID-19 emergency in Italy.

Although both utterances express a critic towards the Italian government, (35) is more ethical and honest than (36), because in (35) the speaker overtly expresses her commitment to stating that the Italian government is not doing enough to tackle the COVID-19 emergency. Conversely, in (36) this information has to be deduced by the receiver, who is then encharged with the responsibility of construing the correct inference associated to the utterance. The only item of information being explicitly asserted in (36) is instead that the Right-wing party can do much more and much better to deal with the COVID-19 emergency.

Outside the philosophical domain, however, manipulation can also be intended as indicating the end state of a convincing process, i.e. the state in which the addressee eventually forms an opinion or a belief in her mind. Therefore, a person is eventually “persuaded” when her background knowledge is reshaped and updated with new content introduced in it. In this sense, the achievement of somebody’s persuasion is also the intrinsic goal of any manipulative process, since manipulation makes for instilling contents in the receiver’s mind. Belief formation and mental model restructuring are two crucial features both persuasion and manipulation have in common and strive to attain, but while the means of persuasion are more beneficial because they do not reduce the addressee’s power of choice, the means of manipulation are on the whole potentially harmful because they leave the addressee with little, if any, room for believing and acting autonomously and without ideological constraints.

Throughout the book, then, I will basically comply with the second, less dynamic, conception of persuasion, that is, as the ultimate purpose of any manipulative communicative process. Any use of the term that deflects from this interpretation will be properly accounted for.

Quantitative and experimental approaches to implicit and manipulative communication

Natural selection favours people who successfully manipulate objects in their environment. Some manipulable objects are inanimate, such as the raw materials used to build shelters, tools, clothing or weapons. Other manipulable objects are alive, these include predators and preys of different species as well as mates, parents, children, rivals and allies of the same species.

– Buss et al. 1987

2.1 Introduction

Over the last decade, implicit communication has been the plank of much contention in both theoretical and empirical perspectives on pragmatics research (Drai & Saussure 2016; Masia et al. 2017; Domaneschi et al. 2018, *inter alia*). Because of its persuasive and manipulative consequences in language comprehension, the functioning of presumptive meanings and their linguistic manifestations have eventually reached the domain of propagandistic language (Sbisà 1999; Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014; Garassino et al. 2019) in which most uses of non-explicit communicative devices are targeted at conveying subliminal messages. Presuppositions and implicatures are among the most widely exploited strategies to achieve this aim, but also the role of other discourse phenomena is being devoted always more attention by both linguists and philosophers of language who are interested in unraveling their manipulative properties in communication. In what follows, I will discuss some glaring examples of how presuppositions, implicatures, topicalization and vagueness can be exploited as extremely persuasive linguistic devices in political discourse and in the language of advertising. Some recent experimental findings on their processing in the human brain will also be touched upon.

2.2 Persuasive presuppositions

As strategies by which some content is presented as already shared by the addressee, presuppositions end up serving extremely persuasive – let alone, at time, manipulative – purposes since interlocutors are taken to share the responsibility for “what is presupposed” (Meibauer 2014). As rightfully observed by Mazzarella et al. (2018), presuppositions create, so to say, a *collective voice* in an ongoing exchange, in that

the speaker is assumed not to take direct responsibility for conveying some content. Let us consider the slogans in (1) and (2).

- (1) NUTELLA. *Feed your addiction*
- (2) COCA COLA. *Open happiness*

In (1), the use of the definite description *your addiction* takes for granted that the recipient has an addiction to Nutella. Moreover, in expected compliance with the Maxim of Relation, the whole utterance also implies that the addressee's addiction should be fed buying Nutella. By the same token, in (2), the change of state verb *open* activates the presupposition that happiness is "closed" inside Coca Cola and you can free it by drinking some. In (3) below, the comparative adjectives *bigger* presupposes that, so far, you have been doing things which were not big enough, but with Samsung Galaxy Note 8 you can dare more.

- (3) SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 8. *Do bigger things*

Finally, in (4) the adjective *next* carries the presupposition that Mercedes has made other best things in the past, and so its quality never lets you down.

- (4) MERCEDES BENZ. *Our smallest SUV is the next best thing*

Reading the slogans in (1)–(4), the addressee is subtly invited to comply with the contents they presuppose. Therefore in (1), she has to reshape her mental world so as to conform to the idea that she already has an addiction to Nutella, a state of things which probably did not exist before the ad was read. Similarly, in (2) and (3) the addressee has to accept the fact that her eyes are closed and that so far she has been doing smaller things. Then, in (4), she is required to accommodate the previously inexistent idea that Mercedes Benz has always had quality products.

Presupposition use in such contexts becomes manipulative because it builds *psychologically controlled* mental models (see also Chapter Four) serving as indisputable conceptual grounding to which other new information is added. In taking their content for granted the receiver is not led to put a presupposition into discussion, as this would make the speaker appear a non-cooperative contributor to the goals of conversation.

2.3 Persuasive topicalizations

We have seen that topics and topicalizations classify phrases as not falling within the scope of a sentence's illocutionary force and thus as informationally less important than focused phrases. On receptive grounds, this property correlates with

the assumption that any information conveyed as topic in a sentence is presented as if it had already been introduced in the universe of discourse and in the conscious memory of the receiver. For this reason, any piece of information realized as topic would not deserve any further attentive processing to be understood. To better elucidate how this mechanism works in advertising, consider the following slogans.

- (5) ILLY COFFEE. *Perfezionare ciò che siamo è una storia senza fine*
[“Improving who we are is a neverending story”]
- (6) LEERDAMMER. *Irresistibile come pochi.*
[“Irresistible like few others”]

The information structure displayed by the utterance in (5) is precisely that of a topic-focus articulation, which means that *perfezionare ciò che siamo* (“Improving who we are”) is conveyed as already given information and thereby not needing to be further evaluated. The addressee is thus required to take as already given content the fact that Illy coffee producers always try to improve themselves. This information item is not being conveyed as the communicative goal of the message, and so it may less likely become the object of critical evaluation on the part of the receiver. Similarly, the informational articulation of (6) would have *irresistibile* (“irresistible”) realizing the topic of the sentence, while the rest is its focus.¹ The idea that Leerdammer cheese is irresistible is therefore presented as already introduced in the addressee’s mental model of discourse (like a silent “file card” in Heim’s terms, cf. Heim 1982), while the comparative predicate *come pochi* (“like few others”) is the comment to be added to it.

In the following Spanish ad (7), the head noun *un circuito de energía* is realized as the topic unit of the relative sentence. This conveys the effect that the idea that Milka chocolate gives you energy has to be processed as already given, namely as already part of some common shared knowledge.

- (7) MILKA CHOCOLATE. *Un circuito de energía que necesita de gente unida para funcionar*
[‘A circuit of energy that needs united people to work out’]

Similarly to the slogan in (6), the one in (8) has an adjective (*tenero*, ‘soft’) in topic and the remaining sentence unit as focus. In this way, the receiver is led to take as given idea that Riomare tunafish is soft, which is indeed the most persuasive quality of the product, even more than its ability of being cut by a breadstick.

1. Although one could assume a focal reading of the adjective “irresistible”, the topic-focus articulation is quite clear from the Italian version of the slogan and further buttressed by its oral version broadcast on TV.

- (8) TONNO RIOMARE. *Così tenero che si taglia con un grissino*
 ['So soft that can be cut with a breadstick']

As can be noted, the cognitive task imposed by topical information is not so different than the mental operations required to mentally elaborate presupposed contents, in that in both cases the receiver has to adjust her common ground in order to accommodate ideas which do not belong to her previously existing knowledge. And since these ideas are not presented as informationally salient in the ads, they need not be thoroughly processed, with the result that some of their details may pass unnoticed. Indeed, it will be much less probable for the receiver to question the veracity of contents in topic than that of contents in focus (see experimental findings in Section 2.7).

2.4 Persuasive implicatures

Challenging conversational maxims is another diffuse and effective practice in the language of advertising. Indeed, in underencoding the speaker's intentional meaning, implicatures induce recipients to derive it by themselves. Some believe that this function of implicatures is what makes them "defer" the speaker's responsibility to the addressee, in that the speaker is only providing hints with which the receiver can draw whatever conclusion she deems appropriate to the purpose of the ongoing discourse and in compliance with cooperational principles. To see how this works in advertising, consider the slogans in (9) and (10).

- (9) COCA COLA. *Toma lo bueno* ("Take the good")
 (10) ADIDAS. *Impossible is nothing*

(9) challenges the Maxim of Relation in that *lo bueno* ("the good") is expected to refer to Coca Cola. So, even if other possible referents could be associated to the NP *lo bueno*, in order for the slogan to be cooperative, its exclusive reference should be taken to be Coca Cola, and not something else. Yet, the understanding of this association is entrusted to the receiver, so it is a conclusion which the speaker does not directly commit to, but which is conversationally derived if the utterance has to make sense in the communicative task at hand. By the same token, the slogan in (10) conveys the implicature (always by Maxim of Relation) that with Adidas, the impossible becomes possible, and so you could do things which you never imagined you could do.

Going on, (11) and (12) let the receiver infer, without explicitly saying it, that Pasta De Cecco is a high quality type of pasta, and that with Ford Kuga "tomorrow" gets ever closer.

- (11) PASTA DE CECCO. *La qualità ha il colore dell'ambra*
 ['Quality has the colour of amber']
- (12) FORD KUGA. *Bring on tomorrow*

Such inferences are always calculated assuming the message sender to be cooperatively challenging the Maxim of Relation. So, relevance assumptions (Sperber & Wilson 1986) make the association between the products and the qualities being predicated about them plausible and cooperative.

We have said in the previous chapter that, contrary to presupposition and topic, implicatures do not all the way conceal the speaker's *intention to add some content to the common ground*. In fact, in terms of commitment to truth and likelihood to incur critical judgment, the discourse role of implicatures is not so different than that of open assertions, after all. Rather told, if implicatures entrust to the receiver the reconstruction of the speaker's intentional meaning, once such meaning has been derived, the responsibility for its truth is eventually attributed to the speaker, what is not the case with presuppositions and topicalizations. Quoting a metaphor suggested by Kierkegaard (1972) to account for the effects of indirectly conveyed meanings and, particularly, of conversational implicatures, when the speaker implies some content in a message, she composes a "knot" that needs to be undone in order for the message to be understood. Therefore, if the receiver has to gain some benefits from understanding the message conveyed, she must undo the knot by himself, and this places him in a position in which she cannot assess whether the speaker has taken an attacking or a defending attitude. The speaker thus becomes 'an objective something, not a personal man', which makes him less likely challengeable in the interaction" (Masia 2017c: 155).

Moreover, as sketched out earlier in this chapter, implicatures can on the whole be equated with indirect speech acts and, notably, with indirect declarative utterances, on whose truth speaker's commitment is generally higher, and the speaker-to-world fit is also stronger. For this reason, the need to trace back the speaker's implicit intentional meaning is crucially functional to a proper unfolding of the conversational exchange. Instead, the weight attributed to fully understand the meaning of a presupposition or a topic is not as considerable as that associated with focal or assertive units, being the former outside of the utterance's illocutionary force.

2.5 Persuasive vagueness

We have described vagueness as a property characterizing expressions which convey less definite and fuzzier semantic values. In terms of meaning representation, vagueness makes it more difficult to exhaustively construe a particular concept,

with the result that the recipients will resolve the vague meaning on discretionary bases. To make it more simple, a vague expression is like an empty slot endowed with a well-defined form and structure but which must be filled in with some content. If the speaker is weakly cooperative in putting more content in the slot, the addressee will have to do the job, and this obviously leaves space for potential misunderstanding or possibly untruthful representations.

(13) LUFTHANSA. *We take time to give you more time*

The slogan in (13), for example, conveys at least two vague meanings. In saying “we give you more time” it does not explicitly define how much time; also, “more time...” to do what? Why would more time be useful for somebody choosing to fly with Lufthansa? Spend more time at a bar? Chat with friends on the phone? Go shopping in duty free shops? The fuzzy semantic boundaries of the whole proposition thus induce the addressee to go looking for several possible representations that might fit the (incomplete) content of the message. This eventually shifts the responsibility of any created representation to the recipient. Therefore, should the selected representation be potentially false, the sender could not be blamed for something she has not herself said. A similar case is offered in (14).

(14) B&B PORTO CESAREO. *La vacanza che non pesa*
(B&B Porto Cesareo. “The holiday which is not heavy”)

Here vagueness is mainly determined by the content of the defining relative clause (...*che non pesa*, “which is not heavy”) and, notably, by the potentially ambivalent meaning of *pesare* in Italian, which can either mean weigh a lot, be a nuisance or involve a heavy expenditure, among other meanings. So, the interpretation one could derive is that the holiday is not heavy because it does not require taking too many bags, it does not cost too much or because you will not feel annoyed in living this experience.

In the ad in (15),

(15) LINDT. *Quelques grammes de finesse dans un monde de brutes*
[‘Some grams of finess in a world of brute people’]

the indefinite description *un monde de brutes* conveys the existence of a world of brute people but leaves completely undefined who they are. Also, the indefinite phrase *quelques grammes* does not specify how many grams the chocolate tablet weighs.

Finally, in the following Barilla ad in (16), the idea of *casa* (‘home’) appears semantically vague in that it may evoke more than a single concept of home.

(16) BARILLA. *Bentornati a casa!*
[‘Welcome home!’]

In fact, depending on everyone's habits with eating pasta, *casa* can more extensively denote "Italy" (given that it is a typical Italian dish), it can refer to our parents' house, if they are used to cooking pasta whenever we visit them, and so forth.

2.6 Persuasive effects of presupposition, topic, implicatures and vagueness in political discourse

The persuasive effectiveness of implicit communication, though, does not only characterize the language of advertising. Actually, because of its capacity to generate surreptitious beliefs and convictions in receivers' minds, implicitness is also massively exploited in political discourse. Interestingly enough, the use of the four strategies described so far seems to be widely diffuse on a cross-linguistic basis. Below, I report excerpts of political speeches held by Italian, English, French and Spanish political leaders.

(17) ITALIAN – FROM MATTEO SALVINI'S SPEECH AT THE VERONA FAMILY CONGRESS (2019)²

1. *Buongiorno a tutti. La mia parola vale più di mille polemiche inventate senza nessun*
2. *senso, senza nessun motivo[vag], quindi...Stiamo vivendo un momento incredibile,*
3. *incredibile. Io ne ho approfittato per leggermi un po' di autori degli anni passati*
4. *– ringraziando gli organizzatori – perché penso che questo congresso per le famiglie,*
5. *pericoloso – io mi son domandato, stanotte ho dormito coi miei due figli, e mi son*
6. *domandato a chi fa paura la parola mamma e la parola papà. Se a qualcuno dà*
7. *fastidio la parola mamma o la parola papà[top], il problema è suo, non è nostro.*
8. *Perché, veramente...se uno...Io sono qua non per togliere niente a nessuno del*
9. *futuro[impl]. Vedo dei manifestanti, con slogan educati. Ho notato una campagna*
10. *stampa, nella vita da giornalista, che, anche in questo caso, mi fa vergognare di*
11. *essere giornalista. Un mix di ipocrisia, di ignoranza, di benpensantismo, di*
12. *politicamente corretto, eh...contro, proprio, li vogliono contro: "Ah, un*
13. *Vicepresidente del Consiglio che va al Congresso delle famiglie. E poi addirittura*

2. Link to the video (in Italian): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXOqtZem4sM>

14. *il Santo Padre che dice 'condivido la sostanza di quello che si dice oggi'.*
15. *Eeeuuuhhhh, pensa te! A favore, dicevamo. Io sono per, non contro.*
Ribadisco:
16. *ognuno della sua vita privata fa quello che vuole, ognuno fa l'amore con chi vuole,*
17. *va a cena con chi vuole, va a teatro con chi vuole, va al cinema con chi vuole. Io*
18. voglio toglier lo Stato dai negozi e dagli studi professionali[pres],
con gli studi di
19. *settore, figurati se voglio portar lo Stato in camera da letto di qualcuno.*
Ognuno, a
20. *casa sua, fa quello che vuole.*

[Eng. translation: – Good morning everybody. My word is much better than thousands of controversies invented without any sense and any reason[vag], and so...we are living an amazing moment, really amazing. I took the opportunity to read book by authors of the past years – thanks to the organizers – because I think that this Family congress, dangerous... – I asked myself, tonight I have slept with my two children, and I asked myself, who fears the words “mum” and “dad”? If the words “mum” and “dad” bother somebody[top], that’s his/her problem, not ours. Because, really, if one... I’m not here to take something away from anybody’s future[impl]. I see protesters with polite slogans. In my life as a reporter, I have noted a press campaign which, also in this case, makes me feel ashamed of being a journalist. A mix of hypocrisy, ignorance, right-thinking, politically correct, ehm....against, they want them against: “Eh, a Vice-President of the Council of Ministers who goes to a Family Congress. And also the Holy Father who says he agrees with what will be said today. Eeeuuuhhhh, how strange! In favour, we were saying. I’m in favour, not against. I repeat: everybody does what she wants in her private life, everybody makes love with whom she wants, goes to dinner with whom she wants, goes to the theatre with whom she wants, goes to the cinema with whom she wants. I want to take the State away from shops and professional studios[pres], with sector studies; imagine if I want to being the State in someone’s bedroom. Everybody, at home, does what she wants.]

In lines 1 and 2, the politician reports about thousands of complaints that have been invented without any purpose (*mille polemiche inventate senza senso, senza alcun motivo*, ‘thousands of controversies invented without any sense and any reason’), yet he does not specify who did that. The whole phrase is vague because it leaves the agent unexpressed, which defers to the audience the responsibility of construing one. In lines 6–7, the pre-posed hypothetical clause *Se a qualcuno dà fastidio la parola mamma o la parola papà* (‘If the words “mum” and “dad” bother somebody’) has a topical status in the sentence (for the topicality of pre-posed hypothetical

clauses, see Thompson 1985 and Givón 2002). This means that the content it encodes is not presented as the speaker's communicative goal, but rather as ancillary information, although it clearly conceals a critic to an addressee X who might not feel comfortable using the words *mamma* and *papà*. Going on, in lines 8 and 9, the complex sentence *Io sono qua non per togliere niente a nessuno del futuro* ('I'm not here to take something away from anybody's future'), may imply, by challenging the Maxim of Relation, that he has been blamed for taking something away from somebody's future. Thus, if this is the hidden meaning of the utterance, the literal proposition has the function of denying this state of affairs. Finally, in line 18, the change of state verb *togliere* ('withdraw, take away from') in *Io voglio togliere lo Stato dai negozi e dagli studi professionali* ('I want to take the State away from shops and professional studios') conveys as to be taken for granted that today the State is interfering with businesses and professional studios. Since the excerpt has been taken from the very opening of the speech, it could well be assumed that each of these implicit contents has not been introduced in the preceding discourse, and so they might be completely new to the hearers.

Below, an extract from Obama's Farewell speech (2017)

(18) ENGLISH – BARACK OBAMA'S FAREWELL SPEECH (2017)³

1. *It's good to be home. My fellow Americans, Michelle and I have been so*
2. *touched by all the well-wishes we've received over the past few weeks. But*
3. *tonight it's my turn to say thanks. Whether we've seen eye-to-eye or rarely*
4. *agreed at all, my conversations with you, the American people – in living*
rooms
5. *and schools; at farms and on factory floors; at diners and on distant*
outposts –
6. *are what have kept me honest, kept me inspired, and kept me going[ppp].*
Every day,
7. *I learned from you. You made me a better President, and you made me a better*
8. *man. I first came to Chicago when I was in my early twenties, still trying to*
9. *figure out who I was; still searching for a purpose to my life. It was in*
10. *neighborhoods not far from here where I began working with church*
groups in
11. *the shadows of closed steel mills. It was on these streets where I witnessed the*
12. *power of faith, and the quiet dignity of working people in the face of struggle*
13. *and loss. This is where I learned that change[top] only happens when ordinary*
14. *people get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it[vag].*
After eight

3. Link to the video and full text: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/10/politics/president-obama-farewell-speech/index.html>

15. *years as your President, I still believe that. And it's not just my belief. It's the*
16. *beating heart of our American idea – our bold experiment in*
self-government. It's
17. *the conviction that we are all created equal, endowed by our Creator*
with certain
18. *unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It's*
19. *the insistence that these rights, while self-evident, have never been self-*
20. *executing; that We, the People, through the instrument of our democracy, can*
21. *form a more perfect union. This is the great gift our Founders gave us. The*
22. *freedom to chase our individual dreams through our sweat, toil, and*
23. *imagination – and the imperative to strive together as well, to achieve a greater*
24. *good.*

To be conveyed as already shared information in line 6 is the fact that Obama was honest, inspired and willing to go on also before. This presupposition is projected by the change of state verb *keep* inducing the assumption that a given state of affairs obtained also prior to utterance time. In line 13, the informational articulation of the sentence ...*change only happens when ordinary people get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it* clearly features a topic-focus patterning, with the focal clause being introduced by the focus-sensitive operator *only*, while the preceding word (*change*) is realized as topic. This configuration allows interpreting “change” as an already active idea in prior discourse and in the conscious attention of the receiver, when in fact it appears for the first time in the text. Therefore, the fact that Obama’s government is willing to promote a change is proffered to the addressee as content she already knows and thus not deserving further evaluation. The same string of text also contains vague contents: what does the political leader mean with “get involved”? Get involved in what? And “get engaged”? What are then citizens supposed to “demand”? What makes these verb phrases semantically vague is the lack of relevant arguments, which must be filled by the receiver with any interpretation she deems suitable to his own views and to the overall consistency of the discourse; yet, any additional interpretation cannot but be subjective and potentially untrue.

Going on with French, consider the Excerpt in (19).

(19) FRENCH – MARINE LE PEN’S SPEECH IN LYON (2017)⁴

1. *Mesdames, Messieurs,*
2. *Très chers compatriotes de métropole, de l’outre-mer ou de l’étranger. Si vous*
3. *êtes ici aussi nombreux aujourd’hui, c’est que vous avez compris, et*
l’actualité

4. Link to the video and full text: <https://www.medias-presse.info/grand-discours-de-programme-de-marine-le-pen-le-5-fevrier-2017-a-lyon-texte-et-video/68929/>

4. récente en a apporté une démonstration éclatante, que contre la droite du fric et
5. la gauche du fric[ppp], je suis la candidate de la France du peuple. En effet, à
6. tous égards, cette élection présidentielle n'est pas comme les autres; elle met en
7. jeu un débat crucial qui engage notre pays de manière fondamentale. De son
8. issue, dépendront la continuité de la France en tant que nation libre et pour
9. ceux qui comme nous se sentent avant tout français, notre existence en tant que
10. peuple. Après des décennies d'erreur et de lâchetés, après des fausses
11. alternances faites de reniements et de laisser-aller, de laisser-passer, de laisser-
12. faire[top], nous sommes à la croisée des chemins. Je le dis avec gravité: le choix
13. que nous aurons à faire dans cette élection est un choix de civilisation[impl]. La
14. question est, en même temps, simple et cruelle: nos enfants vivront-ils dans un
15. pays libre, indépendant, démocratique? Pourront-ils encore se référer à notre
16. système de valeurs? Auront-ils le même mode de vie que nous et nos parents
17. avant nous? Nos enfants, et les enfants de nos enfants, auront-ils encore un
18. travail, un salaire digne, la possibilité de se constituer un patrimoine, de devenir
19. propriétaire, de fonder dans un environnement sûr une famille, d'être soignés
20. correctement, de s'élever à l'école, de vieillir dignement[impl]?

[Eng. translation: – Ladies and Gentlemen, dear compatriots of the city, of overseas and abroad. If you are here so numerous today, it is because you have understood, and the recent news are a glaring example of that, that against the Right of the money and the Left of the money[ppp], I am the candidate of the France of the people. In fact, in all respects, this presidential election is not like the others; it involves a crucial debate which commits our country in a fundamental way. The freedom of France will depend on the outcome of this debate, and so will the freedom of those people who feel, above all, French, as well as our existence as people. After decades of mistakes and cowardice, after false alternances made of denials and letting-go, letting-pass, laisser-faire[top], we are now at a crossroads. I say it seriously: the choice we are going to make in this election is a choice of civilization[impl]. The question is, at the same time, simple and cruel: will our children live in a free, independent and democratic country? Will they still be able to rely on our system of values? Will they have the same lifestyles as our parents? Will our children, and our children's children, have a job, a decent wage and the possibility to build assets, to become owners, to start a family in a safe environment, to access quality healthcare, to go to a school and to grow old with dignity?[impl] -]

In lines 4 and 5, Marine Le Pen uses two definite descriptions (*la droite du fric et la gauche du fric*, ‘the Right of the money and the Left of the money’) to convey as shared information that there exist right and left-wing parties that are only interested in the money (*fric*), whereas she is the candidate of the France of the People. In lines 10 to 12, the politician conveys as topical information that for ten years up to now there have been mistakes, cowardice, false alternances made of denials and let-go and *laissez-faire* (*Après des décennies d’erreur et de lâchetés, après des fausses alternances faites de reniements et de laisser-aller, de laisser-passer, de laisser-faire*). In line 13, not only is it asserted that this election is a choice of civilization (*cette élection est un choix de civilisation*), but it also conveys as implicature that other political parties running previous governments were not the emblem of civilization. Recourse to implicature strategies goes on with the list of rhetorical questions on the future of France (from line 14 to 20). The implicatures associated with these questions are that other political parties may not ensure that France will be a free country in the future, it may not be democratic, there exists a risk that the young will not have the possibility to rely on the same system of values and that they may not have a job or a fair salary. The reason why she is asking these questions is obviously not because she expects her audience to reply in some way, but wants them to draw the already pre-conceived conclusion that with governments other than the Rassemblement National, all these issues will be at risk.

Finally, a quick look at Spanish. The following excerpt has been taken from a speech held by Mariano Rajoy at the National Committee of the *Partido Popular* in 2018.

(20) SPANISH – DISCURSO DE MARIANO RAJOY ANTE EL COMITÉ EJECUTIVO NACIONAL DEL PP (2018)⁵

1. *Esta semana el Gobierno del Partido Popular, el gobierno que yo tuve el honor*
2. *de presidir, fue censurado parlamentariamente por un desordenado conjunto de*
3. *formaciones políticas[vag], que han dado su confianza al candidato alternativo.*
4. *La primera valoración de lo ocurrido y la más importante, la que nunca se debe*
5. *olvidar, es que va a gobernar alguien que ha perdido las elecciones[impl].*
Se ha
6. *sentado un precedente grave en la historia de la democracia española;*
gobierna
7. *el país alguien rechazado sistemáticamente por los españoles cuando se les ha*
8. *pedido su opinión a través de las urnas. Alguien que no ha ganado unas*

5. Link to the full speech: <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20180605/444123804661/discurso-integro-de-mariano-rajoy-ante-el-comite-ejecutivo-nacional-del-pp.html>

9. *elecciones nunca. Muchos de vosotros habéis sufrido una experiencia semejante:*
10. *habéis ganado las elecciones autonómicas o municipales y no habéis podido*
11. *gobernar por los pactos entre partidos que perdieron las elecciones; pero con ser*
12. *cierto esto, no es menos cierto, que ese comportamiento jamás había llegado al*
13. *Gobierno de la nación. Y lo que es peor, para hacerlo ha tenido que hacerse*
14. *acompañar por los grupos más extremistas de la izquierda populista y del*
15. *independentismo sectario[ppp]. Por primera vez en nuestra historia, gobierna*
16. *España quien ha pedido las elecciones, y no por una diferencia corta. Ese*
17. *estigma[ppp] acompañará a este gobierno desde el primer minuto de su*
18. *existencia y hasta el final. Pero no sólo a este gobierno; el Partido Socialista*
19. *Obrero Español, que se ha hecho acreedor de tantos méritos en la historia*
20. *reciente de nuestro país.*

[Eng. translation: – This week, the Government of the Popular Party, the Government I have had the honor to rule was censured on parliamentary bases because of an unordered set of political formations[vag] who supported the alternative candidate. A first consideration to make about this and the most important, what should never be forgotten, is that someone who has not won the elections[impl] is going to take power. A bad precedent has been set: someone who has been systematically rejected by the Spanish, when they have been asked to express their vote, is going to rule the country. Someone who has never won an election. Many of you have already gone through a similar experience: you have won regional and municipal elections and you could not rule because of the pacts between the other parties who had failed the elections. But, despite this being true, it is not less certain that this behavior had never reached the Nation's Government. And, even worse, in order to do that, he had to gain the support of the most extreme groups of the populist leftists and of the sectarian independentists[ppp]. For the first time in our history, Spain is governed by who asked the elections, and not for a short difference. This stigma[ppp] will accompany this government since the very first minute of its existence until the end. But, not only this government; the Spanish Working Socialist Party, which has gained a lot of merits in the recent history of our country.]

Lines 2 and 3 depict an interesting case of semantic vagueness coded by an indefinite description referring to an underspecified group of political formations (*un desordenado conjunto de formaciones políticas*). Challenging the gricean maxim of relation, the politician conveys as implicature the fact that the *candidato alternativo* (“alternative candidate”) has taken power without being elected by the people (*alguien que ha perdido las elecciones*). Then, by means of two definite descriptions

(*del independentismo settario*), he presupposes the existence of a sectarian independence movement (line 14–15) and the fact that everything that has happened is a stigma (*Ese stigma*, lines 16–17).

As can be noted, almost all strategies of implicit communication found in the above excerpts are associated with contents that can be deemed, so to say, challengeable or debatable, in that they do not concern factual and objective truths but often reflect subjective remarks of the speakers, such as attacks, opinions or self-praising evaluations. I will turn to this aspect of the use of implicit communication in the subsequent chapter.

It is worth adding that some of the above strategies can also be triggered by other co-occurring discourse devices. For instance, not infrequently, implicatures are generated by metaphorical allusions. The occurrence in (21) has been taken from a 1963 speech by Palmiro Togliatti, Secretary of the Italian Communist Party.⁶

- (21) Ma è accaduto **come per le api dell'amaro verso col quale Virgilio accusava i profittatori dell'opera sua. Ricordate: voi fate il miele, o Api, ma sono gli altri che lo godono.** [PTOG63-T1]
 ['It happened like the bees of the bitter verse with which Virgil accused the profiteers of his labor. Remember: you make the honey, o Bees, but other will enjoy it!']

Here the association between workers' conditions and those of the bees (that produce honey while others benefit from it) conveys the implicature that workers do not enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Another interesting case of manipulative implicature comes from what Masini et al. (2018) called *lists*. In their framework, lists in discourse result from the syntagmatic chaining of elements of the same type which belong to a similar syntactic slot. This chaining also bears the entailment that such elements are all hyponyms of a common super-ordinate hypernym, called *common integrator*. The Example in (22) comes from a tweet posted by Beppe Grillo (Five Stars Movement) in 2015.

- (22) Elezioni per Roma il prima possibile. Prima che la città venga sommersa **dai topi, dalla spazzatura e dai clandestini.** [BGRI15-N1]
 ['Elections for Rome as soon as possible. Before the city is overwhelmed by mice, rubbish and illegal immigrants']

The semantic association of mice, rubbish and illegal immigrants evokes the hypernymic concept "nuisance of Rome". The interpretation stemming from this association is that illegal immigrants are placed on an equal footing as mice and rubbish, as the most negative sides of the city of Rome.

6. This example, like the ones in (22) and (23) come from the IMPAQTS corpus developed within the PRIN project (project code: 2017STJCE9, of the University of Roma Tre), cf. Chapter 6.

Always from Togliatti's speech (1963), the list-dependent implicature in (23) hints at more positive perspectives of the working class.

- (23) La nostra accresciuta forza nel Paese e nel Parlamento è ciò che occorre per aprire davvero una prospettiva nuova **di pace e di sviluppo democratico, di ascesa del benessere dei lavoratori, di avvento al potere delle classi lavoratrici.**

[PTOG63-T1]

['Our increased power in the Country and in Parliament is what is needed to really open a new perspective of peace and democratic development, of the rise of workers' well-being, of the working classes' coming to power.']

The implicature here stems from associating the coming to power of working classes to an improvement of workers' well-being and a perspective of peace and democratic development, and lets infer that these latter conditions can be attained only if working classes succeed in ruling the country.

If the implicit conveyance of meanings plays a crucial role in traditional political speeches (as we will see again in Chapter Three), we could expect it to play a remarkable role in social networks as well. In fact, most political messages today are spread through Social Network Sites (SNS) and, in so doing, they reach a wider audience of potential voters (even those not taking part in political rallies but who are interested in discussing or learning about political issues on the web) thus allowing a more direct confrontation with the public. However, owing to the virtual space in which interactions take place in SNSs, political exponents often do not spare blunt and, not infrequently impolite, messages towards their opponents, while bolstering their own ideas and reputation in the eyes of their electorate.

Recent lines of corpus-based research have shed light on the communicative strategies used by politicians on SNS such as Twitter or Facebook. Some studies have analyzed the communicative functions or types of contents of politicians' messages on Twitter, and distinguished between broadcasting, attacking, self-praising or opinion-making messages, among others (Lee & Xu 2018; Graham et al. 2013; Garassino et al. 2020).⁷ By way of illustration, I report below two examples for each content type taken from recently posted political tweets.

7. These content types will be more extensively described in the following chapter, yet, for the sake of clarity, I deem it useful to anticipate some of the definitions here. Attack is usually manifested as criticism directed to a political opponent or group. Self-praise is conveyed by a positive remark about oneself or one's policy. Opinion or Stance-taking is expressed by the conveyance of one's position or stance on a given issue. The Twitter analysis presented in this section will also consider Praise-to-Other as another content type, which refers to positive or boasting remarks about someone else.

ATTACK

(24) **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump [26.04.2020]

I never said the pandemic was a Hoax! Who would say such a thing? I said that the Do Nothing Democrats, together with their Mainstream Media partners, are the Hoax. They have been called out & embarrassed on this, even admitting they were wrong, but continue to spread the lie!

(25) **Giorgia Meloni** @GiorgiaMeloni [23.04.2020]

Sì Mes, no Eurobond: eppure PD e M5S festeggiano lo stesso. Sono semplicemente ridicoli.

[‘Yes Mes, no Eurobonds: yet, the Democratic Party and the Five Stars Movement celebrate anyway. They are simply ridiculous’]

In (24) Trump is strongly critical of the Democrats and their Mainstream Media and accuses them of having spread the fake news that he would say that the COVID-19 pandemic was a hoax. Giorgia Meloni, leader of the right-wing Italian populist party, Fratelli d’Italia (‘Brothers of Italy’) openly states that the Democratic Party and the Five Stars Movement are ridiculous because they have refused to accept the use of Eurobonds to rescue Italy from the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 emergency.

OPINION

(26) **Barack Obama** @BarackObama [24.04.2020]

If we want life to approach anything like normal anytime soon, we need a comprehensive testing program. It’s not going to be cheap, but it will ultimately pay off many times over in saved lives, saved businesses, and saved jobs.

(27) **Matteo Salvini** @matteosalvinimi [25.04.2020]

L’Italia deve ripartire all’insegna della fiducia e del buonsenso, azzerando burocrazia, ostacoli e vincoli che rallentano la ricostruzione.

[‘Italy must restart in the name of trustfulness and common sense, eliminating bureaucracy, obstacles and constraints which slow down reconstruction’]

The tweets in (26) and (27), respectively from Barack Obama (former President of the United States and member of the U.S. Democrats) and from Matteo Salvini (leader of the League party) – clearly express the politicians’ points of view on the program to adopt to save U.S economy and on how Italy should restart abandoning old red tapes.

PRAISE

(28) **Luigi Di Maio** @luigidimaio [25.04.2020]

L’emozione, il tricolore, la libertà. La grandezza del nostro Paese.

[‘The emotion, the tricolor flag, freedom. The greatness of our country’]

(29) **Boris Johnson** @BorisJohnson [06.04.2020]

I'd like to say thank you to all the brilliant NHS staff taking care of me and others in this difficult time. You are the best of Britain. Stay safe everyone, and please remember to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives.

Praise can be expressed in the form of positive or boasting remarks about one's own country or policy. In (28), Luigi Di Maio (Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and member of the Five Stars Movement) pays a tribute to the greatness of Italy on the day of Liberation (25th April). Johnson in (29) commends the hard work of the National Health Service in facing the coronavirus emergency and in saving lives.

INFORMATIVE

(30) **Giuseppe Conte** @GiuseppeConteIT [09.04.2020]

La mia intervista alla [@BBCWorld](#)
[‘My interview for BBCWorld’]

(31) **Antonio Tajani** @Antonio_Tajani [23.04.2020]

Amici vi aspetto dalle 18.30 in collegamento su Facebook con l'avvocato Luca Favini e con Vincenzo Marinese, Presidente [@Confindustria](#) Venezia. Parleremo di Europa e dell'emergenza Covid-19.

[‘Dear friends, I wait for you at 18.30 on Facebook with the lawyer Luca Favini and Vincenzo Marinese, President of Confindustria in Venice. We will talk about Europe and the Covid-19 emergency’]

As anticipated, informative tweets usually involve more neutral contents. In (30), Giuseppe Conte, Prime Minister of the Italian Government, spreads the news of his interview with BBCWorld, while Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the center-right party Forza Italia and of the European Popular Party, invites his supporters to watch his meeting with two other interlocutors on the coronavirus emergency.

In a work authored with Davide Garassino (University of Zurich) and Nicola Brocca (University of Innsbruck), we analyzed patterns of interactions between English and Italian political leaders and their use of presuppositions, implicatures or no implicit strategy at all in a corpus of political tweets gathered in 2015 (Garassino et al. 2018). Also, we assessed levels of associations between these politicians and communicative functions such as attack, opinion, (neutral) information, speaker-centered praise or praise to others. Below, I report the trends (calculated with Pearson's correlation tests) yielded by the analysis which displays how likely English and Italian politicians are to use presuppositions, implicatures or plain assertions in their tweets (Figure 1), and how likely they are to post tweets to convey each of the above mentioned content types. (Figure 2).

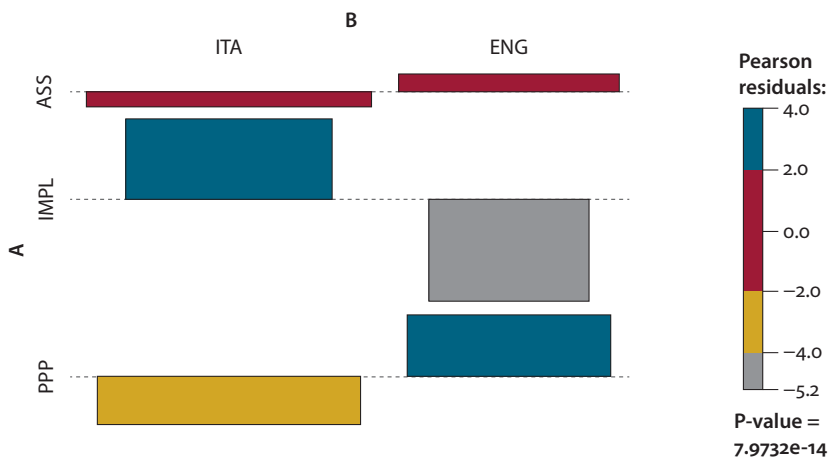


Figure 1. Pearson's correlation coefficients of Italian and English tweets (from Garassino et al. 2018)

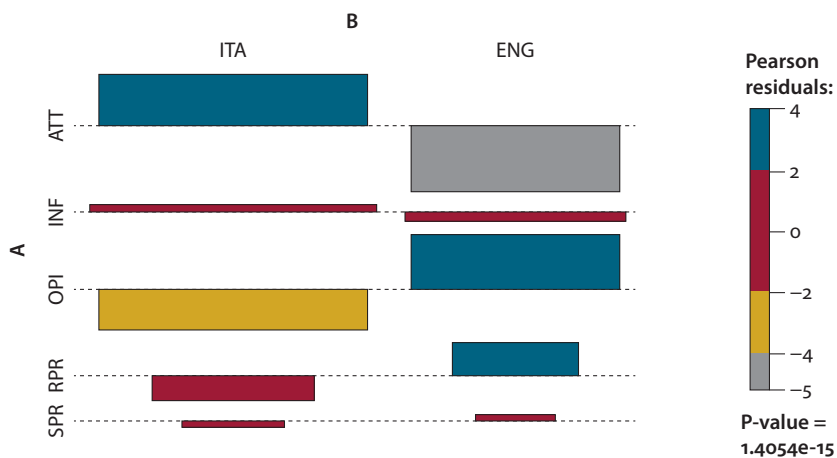


Figure 2. Pearson's correlation coefficients between English and Italian tweets and communicative functions (from Garassino et al. 2018)

Figure 1 shows quite remarkable associations between the two groups of politicians and given discourse strategies. Notably, while the use of assertion appears to be quite evenly distributed between Italian and English tweets, implicatures seem to be more widespread in Italian tweets and much less in English tweets. The upward blue rectangle indeed indicates a positive association between Italian politicians and implicature strategies. Conversely, the dark red downward rectangle is suggestive

of a negative association between implicature and English politicians. On the other way round, English politicians are more positively associated with presuppositions, while Italian politicians are not. There thus seems to be an overall preference of the two political groups to resort to different types of implicit strategies to convey their ideas on Twitter. It must be highlighted, though, that – as already said – all analyzed tweets were collected from 2015 posts, so these ad interim considerations would no doubt benefit from appraising and replicating the analysis on a more recent corpus. Yet, the adopted methodology purports to be a good illustration of how the use and function of implicit communication on Twitter can be quantified (in Chapter 6, I will present another method that has been devised for traditional political speeches).

In a similar study (Garassino et al. 2019), we compared correlations between implicit strategies and communicative functions in tweets and traditional political speeches. For this work, we focused our analysis on three politicians, Beppe Grillo (Movimento Cinque Stelle/Five Stars Movement), Matteo Renzi (at that time leader of the Democratic Party) and Matteo Salvini (leader of the League party). Our research hypotheses mainly involved assessing the extent to which certain association preferences between implicit strategies and content types appear consistent in a diamesic perspective. The corpus used for the analysis was therefore represented by tweets posted by the three Italian politicians in 2015 and a collection of speeches they held between February 2014 and October 2017.⁸ Owing to the properties of the two types of channels, we expected the investigated correlations to slightly differ between Twitter messages and public speeches. Particularly, we expected praise to others to be more widespread in Twitter than in traditional speeches, and this could be largely put down to Twitter function of expressing social grooming and consolidating interactions between users (Marwick & boyd 2011; Garassino et al. 2019). By contrast, attack, opinion and self-praise were expected to be equally diffuse in the two media “owing to the relevance (presumably medium-independent) for the politician to (a) reaffirm his adherence to the ideological tenets of his party, (b) boast the reliability of his policy, compared to those promoted by other political opponents, and (c) smear the reputation of adversaries in the eyes of the electorate” (Garassino et al. 2019). Figure 3 displays the distribution of the five communicative functions and their association with implicatures and presuppositions in Twitter messages and in public speeches.

8. The speeches were taken from the OPPP! corpus, which will be more extensively described in Chapter 6.

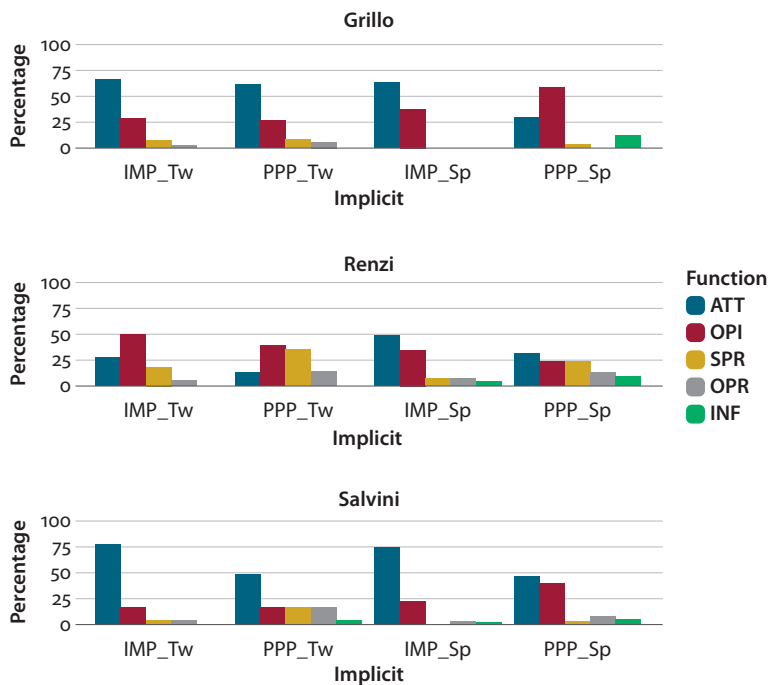


Figure 3. Distribution of communicative functions and implicit strategies in Twitter and public speeches (Garassino et al. 2019)

A *prima facie* consideration that can be made is that Grillo is on the whole more likely to use attack in his tweets than in his public speeches. Conversely, he more often expresses opinions in his speeches than in his tweets. In Renzi, the expression of attack is slightly more diffuse in traditional speeches than in Twitter messages, while the opposite situation holds for opinion. Salvini's data show the lowest variability in that the distribution of attacking contents does not seem to vary that much between tweets and public speeches, with a slightly more recurrent use of opinion content types in these latter. The remaining types of contents depict a more balanced diamesic distribution for all politicians. Shifting to implicit strategies, it can be noted that attack is more frequently associated with presupposition packaging in Grillo's tweets. Similarly, Grillo more often uses presuppositions to convey opinions in his speeches than in his tweets. In Renzi's data, opinion more frequently correlates with implicature in both tweets and public speeches. Conversely, Salvini confirms his preference to express attacks through implicatures both in Twitter and in speeches.

Thanks to a series of Chi-tests (Levshina 2015), it has been possible to better assess the distribution of the five content types between the two types of medium. The graphicated results are reported in Figure 4.

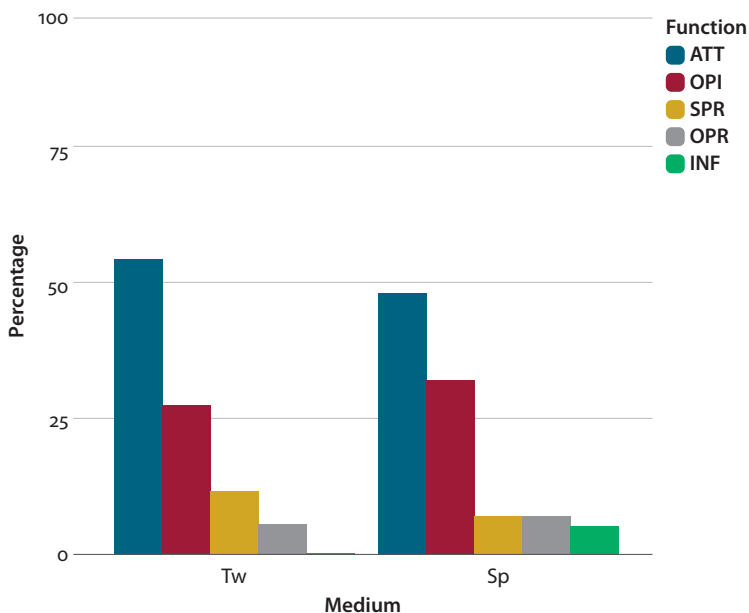


Figure 4. Distribution of the variables Medium and content type (or pragmatic function) in the corpus (from Garassino et al. 2019)

What can be noticed from the obtained percentages is that speaker-centered praise is overall more diffuse on Twitter than in speeches. Attack is on the whole more overrepresented in Grillo's data, especially on Twitter, whereas it is underrepresented in Renzi's Twitter data. In Renzi, Opinion is more frequent on Twitter than in speeches, while Salvini shows a fairly strong preference for Attack in both types of medium. From a visual inspection of the data in Figure 3, it can be deduced that attacking contents are on the whole more frequently coded as implicatures than other content types in both tweets and public speeches, while opinion more often receives presuppositional packaging.

It must be pointed out that both the tweets and public speeches refer to a time period in which Renzi was Prime Minister, while Salvini and Grillo belonged to opposition parties. This may partly account for a different incidence of the five content types in their Twitter and speeches data; yet, a subjective inclination towards expressing one or the other content type cannot all the way be ruled out. Data also show that attack is generally more widespread on Twitter than in speeches, which seems to confirm a relative influence of the medium on the conveyance of particular types of contents. As a matter of fact, Twitter poses socio-interactional filters which [...] legitimize a more straightforward expression of critics and blasting remarks (Garassino et al. 2019: 203). Politicians may indeed feel less constrained

in expressing face-threatening remarks. If on the whole reasonable, this trend is however not entirely expected, given that Twitter is an interactive domain where users can directly interact with the politician and have their say on particular issues. In fact, this should come much more straightforwardly than in the context of a public speech. So, in a way, the “filtering” parameter and the virtual physical distance imposed by social media are probably the propelling factor for using more blasting remarks. By contrast, the more recurrent expression of opinions in public speeches can be attributed to the fact that simply manifest one’s own ideological position may appear less purposeful and weakly impacting for the politician’s manipulative aims. On the contrary, traditional speeches are granted more space and time “to indulge in stance-taking communicative moves” (Garassino et al. 2019: 203). In contexts of physical contact, stance-taking contents have the function of reinforcing the electorate’s sense of adhering to an ideological perspective and corroborates the bonds between different members of the same community of supporters.

What emerged from these quantitative analyses is that not only are politicians sensitive to use implicatures or presuppositions in their messages, but they also show preferences on what content types associate to them. In Chapter 3, I will describe the results of a study conducted on a corpus of political speeches which lend support to the view of a content-oriented use of implicit strategies in these communicative contexts.

2.7 Experimental perspectives on the processing of implicit communication

2.7.1 Behavioral evidence

Studies on the cognitive mechanisms behind the processing of implicit information caught on in conjunction with the emergence of a newly developed branch of neuro-linguistic research, called *neuropragmatics* (Bambini 2010; Hagoort & Levinson 2014). Neuropragmatics delineates a more neurophysiologically-oriented approach to pragmatic phenomena and the way the human brain deals with them in online processing. Over the last decade, the most fruitful and promising works within this purview are those concerning the decoding of metaphorical and other non-literal meanings (Bambini et al. 2014), of different patterns of information structure (Hruska & Alter 2004; Cowles et al. 2007; La Rocca et al. 2016), of different degrees of context-dependency of sentence contents and of presupposed meanings in an utterance (Masia et al. 2017; Domaneschi et al. 2018).

Interestingly, the first studies inquiring the cognitive response to different aspects of discourse structure were not conducted within the remit of general linguistics, being this latter devoid (at the beginning) of fully developed means of scientific experimentation. In fact, cognitive psychologists were first interested in inquiring the mental workings elicited by different structures of the linguistic input. Indeed, owing to its complexity, language could provide compelling insights into the nature of human cognition and its behavior in different processing tasks.

Presupposition, and its relation to the assertive presentation of contents, was one of the discourse phenomena to be investigated on experimental bases. The first experimental inquiries used to test its decoding in a sentence mainly consisted in verification tests, through which, given a visual or linguistic context, presuppositions and assertions were sometimes associated with true sometimes with false information. Using a paradigm of this sort, Peter Hornby (1974) – considered a forerunner in the study of presupposition processing – observed that more mistakes were made by the subjects in detecting false presuppositions than false assertions. Always within the purview of cognitive psychology, Langford & Holmes (1979) resorted to more online measures comparing recognition times of false information when it was presupposed compared to when it was asserted. They noticed that it took longer to subjects to verify false presuppositions than false assertions. Analogous experimental paradigms have been used over the last decade to better assess the cognitive response to presupposed contents as opposed to asserted ones by means of other more sophisticated online measures such as eye-tracking and, in the neurophysiological domain, electroencephalography. Eye-tracking studies revealed an increasing reading speed, with faster eye shifts and fewer regressions when reading presupposed contents, whereas a decreasing speed, with slower eye shifts and more frequent regressions were noticed with asserted contents (Schwarz & Tiemann 2015). If eye movements are indicators of increasing or decreasing efforts in information processing, it can be deduced that while the decoding of assertion imposed greater processing demands, presuppositions are generally less costly in that fewer resources are necessary to decode them.

A quite similar story can be told for experimental inquiries on the processing of distinct patterns of information structure, which caught on early in the 80s with the well-known Moses Illusion paradigm (Erickson & Mattson 1980). Although not properly targeted at directly separating the mental processes behind the decoding of topical and focal constituents in a sentence, this test and its appraisals in subsequent studies allowed noticing differences in the way cognition responded to the distinct syntactic positions of a constituent. In addressing their subjects the following question: *How many animals of each kind did Moses take on the Ark?* Erickson & Mattson noticed that almost all of them answered “two” with little or no awareness that it was

Noah who actually took animals on the Ark. To better inspect the reasons behind this result, Bredart & Modolo (1988) replicated the study administering two different assertive versions of the original testing question, one with Moses in a foregrounded position (*It was Moses who took two animals of each kind on the Ark*), one placing it in the backgrounded part (*It was two animals of each kind that Moses took on the Ark*). This time subjects proved to be faster in detecting the incongruent term when it appeared in focal position and generally less fast when it was in non-focal position. Still, these results left space for legitimate doubts related to the non-assessability of the subjects' knowledge of the events involving the two biblical characters; yet, the fact that focus packaging facilitated the recognition of the incongruity could somehow be seen as a reflection of a different level of attention elicited by the two types of informational presentations of the wrong term. Later on, also the psychological underpinnings of the topic-focus distinction has been the object of more accurate online measures through which either reading times and eye movements were reported to differ for the two information units. Notably, while focus elicited slower reading times and eye shifts – and, sometimes, also more frequent regressions – topic induced faster reading times and eye shifts with less frequent regressions. So, similarly to what has been said for presupposition, also topic seems to cost less in processing, while greater processing demands are imposed by focus packaging.

Experimental data on implicatures processing are on the whole scater and mainly zoom in on the scalar type. Interesting body of behavioral evidence comes from the acquisitional domain which has Ira Noveck (2001) as one of its main precursors. Based on a series of visual-paradigm tasks, Noveck (2001) observed that children are generally more likely than adults to treat scalar terms such as *some* as entailing stronger values in the scale they belong to. Subsequent studies (Degen & Tanenhaus 2015) revealed that the costs related to the processing of scalar inferences were mainly constraint-based, and, precisely, conditional upon the naturalness and availability of the alternatives to *some* in a given context. Similar trends were noticed by Tavano & Kaiser (2010) who report that their subjects took more or less time to compute scalar inferences depending on how consistent they were with the experimental context. Van Tiel & Schaeken (2017) further contributed to these findings by assessing how processing costs of scalar inferences differed depending on the structural characteristics of the required alternatives.

The pragmatic category of vagueness is probably the most largely underexplored. As a matter of fact, apart from some production studies (Parvaresh & Ahmadian 2016), little is known on how vague meanings are dealt with by human attention, whether they are likely to cost more or less than semantically more precise contents. On a priori bases, we could expect that lack of precision might require some extra inferential mechanism aimed at shrinking the semantic boundaries of a vague term, yet future investigations will verify the validity of this hypothesis.

In an earlier study, Bonini et al. (1999) ran an offline experiment to verify how people are more likely to interpret vague adjectives. In their study, a sample of “judgers” were asked to evaluate whether it was true or false to attribute a qualifier to a person or object. 70 participants had to provide judgments of truth, while 69 participants had to give falsity judgments. The two groups of subjects were respectively presented with questions such as (a) and (b) below (Bonini et al. 1999: 381).

- a. – *When is it true to say that a conically shaped formation is a ‘mountain’?*
[in terms of altitude]
- *When is it true to say that a man is ‘old’?* [in terms of years of age]
- b. – *When is it false to say that a conically shaped formation is a ‘mountain’?*
[in terms of altitude]
- *When is it false to say that a man is ‘old’?* [in terms of years of age]

Added to this, other questions with semantically non vague adjectives were administered to the subjects. The adjectives in these questions were uncontrovertibly true or uncontrovertibly false of the person or object they were associated with. Their results showed that the subjects reacted to the questions with vague adjectives as they did to questions with non vague adjectives whose semantic boundaries they did not know. In other words, in both cases they were uncertain on whether to apply the adjectives to the person or object in question. They interpreted these data as lending support to the *vagueness-as-ignorance* hypothesis (Sorensen 1991) according to which the difficulty in determining the boundaries of a vague expression is tantamount to simply ignoring where such boundaries are. This inquiry was chiefly devised to assess the plausibility of epistemological accounts of vagueness, that is, views that conceive vague meanings as stemming from limitations in the knowledge of reality.

2.7.2 Neurolinguistic evidence

A considerable body of experimental evidence on a wide range of pragmatic phenomena associated with implicit communication also comes from the neurophysiological domain. This strand of research has particularly benefited from the potential of different techniques of neurological investigation and, notably, from high time resolution techniques such as electroencephalography (henceforth, EEG) and magnetoencephalography (henceforth, MEG). For reasons of space, I will focus on the most widely used methodology in earlier and current studies on language processing, namely EEG.

EEG (as well as MEG) registers the electrical activity of the brain through signals recorded from electrodes placed on the human scalp. This technique has an extremely high temporal resolution as it allows identifying voltage changes in the electrical activity of the brain on a millisecond level. For this reason, it proves

to be particularly effective and reliable in measuring the brain response to linguistic stimuli at a pace that is on the whole comparable with normal speaking and decoding rates.⁹ Differently than hemodynamic flows (mainly recorded through PET, CT and fMRI techniques), which are much slower, synaptic activity is usually faster and can be immediately recorded on the cortex. The electrical activity of the brain can be registered spontaneously or under the effect of other external sensory stimuli. In this latter case, EEG captures specific event-related potentials (ERPs), that is, neural responses to time-locked events. In the EEG signals (see Figure 5 below), ERPs appear as waveforms with positive or negative deflections that generate components (Kappenman & Luck 2012), characterized by a *latency* (i.e. the time interval between the stimulus onset and the elicitation of the positive or negative deflection), a *polarity* (which can be positive or negative), an *amplitude* (indicated by the extent to which a deflection departs from 0), and a *scalp distribution* (namely, the cortical region where the component has been observed). Figure 5 depicts a configuration of ERP signatures in which negative components peak upward while positive components peak downward.¹⁰

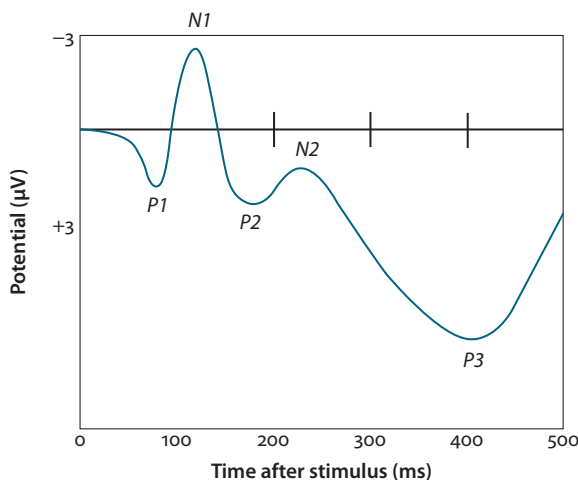


Figure 5. Components of event-related potentials

9. This measurement is on the whole more difficult to glean with other techniques such as fMRI and PET which generally capture hemodynamic flows whose overall sluggishness does not allow assessing brain responses on a millisecond level but they are more precise in detecting the brain regions activated by a given cognitive event.

10. The graphical representation of ERP components can be established on discretionary bases, in that, according to the presentation output, negative components can be plotted downward and positive components upward, or viceversa.

ERPs, though, constitute only a partial representation of brain activity in response to linguistic (and non-linguistic) stimuli. In fact, a more exhaustive neurophysiological scenario on the way the brain responds to different aspects of communication could also be gleaned from inquiring distinct neuronal oscillations, known as frequency bands. Brain rhythms in frequency bands can be inquired through a technique known as time-frequency analysis, which allows measuring the spectral coherence in different frequency ranges. To date, four bands have been found to frequently correlate with language processing, and these are *delta* (0.1–3 Hz), *theta* (4–7 Hz), *alpha* (8–12 Hz) and *beta* band (above 12 Hz), which appear in the EEG signals as in Figure 6.

Also *gamma* band (40 Hz) has sometimes been noticed in connection with the decoding of certain linguistic phenomena, but to a much lesser extent. Differently than ERPs, oscillatory rhythms can reveal brain activity according to time-locked but non phase-locked parameters (Pfurtscheller & Lopes da Silva 1999). This depends

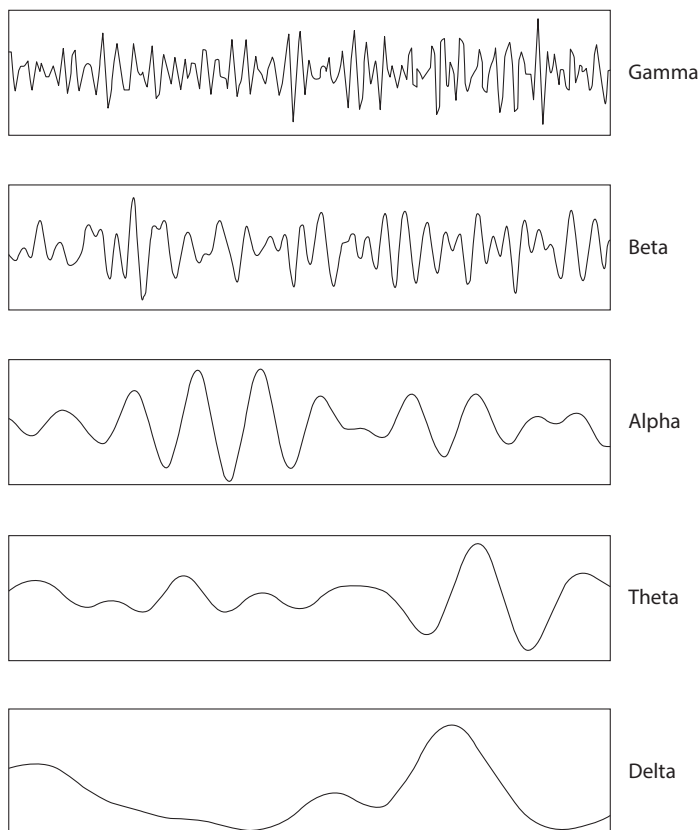


Figure 6. Brain rhythms in the EEG

on the fact that frequency analysis registers ongoing neural activity, which is not evoked, as in the case of ERPs, but induced. Based on the band involved in a particular processing event, neural oscillations can either *synchronize* (Event-Related Synchronization) or *desynchronize* (Event-Related Desynchronization). For example, in conditions of increasing processing efforts, while theta and delta bands generally synchronize, alpha and beta bands desynchronize. So, for these two latter bands, there is an inverse relation between processing costs and power spectrum density levels.¹¹

Within the ERP literature so far, most studies (Kutas & Hillyard 1980; Kutas & Federmeier 2000; Kutas & Federmeier 2011) have shed light on the functional significance of two language-related components: N400 and P600. N400 is a negative component peaking between 300 and 500 ms after stimulus onset and has been mainly observed in connection with semantic anomalies (Kutas & Hillyard 1980), unexpected words in given contexts (Kutas et al. 2011), the processing of metaphorical expressions (Bambini et al. 2014), ambiguity resolution (Haro et al. 2017) and the decoding of less expected information structural patterns (Hruska & Alter 2004; Piciuccio et al. under review). P600, originally known as Syntactic Positive Shift, is a positive component peaking between 600 and 800 ms and is generally elicited in the resolution of morpho-syntactic violations (Hagoort et al. 1993), by the processing of syntactically complex constructions (Gouvea et al. 2010), in the interpretation of ironical meanings (Regel et al. 2011), in the decoding of garden path sentences (Gouvea et al. 2010) and as an index of context repair strategies, as in presupposition accommodation (Domaneschi et al. 2018).

These two components have also been reported to strongly correlate with the processing of different presupposition triggers (Domaneschi et al. 2018) and with different informational articulations of utterances (Schumacher & Hung 2012). More particularly, in a study comparing assertive and presuppositional packaging of the same piece of new information, Masia et al. (2017) found that when some new information is packaged as presupposition, it appears to be costlier than when it is packaged as assertion. This difference was reflected in greater amplitudes in the N400 signature elicited by new presuppositions, as compared to new assertions. This result has been interpreted by the authors as the neurological reflex of a mismatch caused by the “old-status” cue carried by presupposition packaging and the novel status of the information it encodes. New information encoded as assertion, instead, is on the whole more natural as it entails the speaker’s stronger commitment to content not yet shared by the receiver. The costs imposed by

11. Power Spectrum Density is the measure of a signal’s power with respect to its frequency. In the EEG, the spectral density of a frequency band thus defines the amount of energy of a signal that is concentrated within a given time interval at a specific range of oscillations.

accommodation processes also appear to differ between trigger types. For example, in another recent study, Domaneschi et al. (2018) found that the accommodation of change of state verbs elicits more prominent N400 and P600 effects than the accommodation of definite descriptions, possibly due to the more complex semantic representation induced by the former trigger. ERP investigations on the brain response to information structural patterns revealed major N400 effects when prosody is inconsistently used to mark different information statuses (Baumann & Schumacher 2011) or when given and new contents are less consistently aligned with topic and focus units (Wang & Schumacher 2013). Conversely, more prominent P600 effects have been found in connection with syntactic object-topicalizations as compared to subject topicalizations (Burmester et al. 2014).

Within the frequency domain, a less consistent association between activation degrees of information and topic-focus articulations produced increasing event-related synchronization (ERS) effects in the theta band and desynchronization effects in the alpha and beta bands (La Rocca et al. 2016). In a recent research, the processing of information structure has also been inquired looking at its interaction with the word class level (Piciuccio et al. submitted). In this study, it emerged that when a topic is realized by a verb, rather than a noun, its processing ends up being costlier. In fact, topic units are generally more frequently associated with nouns. This cost was reported to be reflected in increasing ERS effects in the theta and delta bands and in increasing desynchronization in the alpha and beta bands.

Electrophysiological investigation on the processing of implicatures is on the whole more scant. One early study on the neuroanatomy of implicatures computation was conducted by Kasher et al. (1999) on clinical patients affected by brain lesions. They noticed that while in patients with damages to both hemispheres the computation of implicature was mostly impaired, in patients with damages to the right hemisphere did not result in a selective or more pronounced deficit relative to patients with damages to the left hemisphere. These results challenge the idea that the right hemisphere is the “pragmatic seat” of the brain, given that both hemispheres cooperate in the reconstruction of pragmatic meaning. More recently, in an ERP study, Noveck & Posada (2003) found more prominent N400 effects in response to both false and true scalar implicatures, which they interpreted as major integration costs than when the true or false information was not presented as a scalar inference. Similar patterns of results are those discussed by Spsychalska et al. (2014) who report greater N400 deflections with post-negative positivity in response to violations of scalar implicatures. In a MEG study, Politzer-Ahles & Gwilliams (2015) first noticed that the brain region mostly involved in the processing of scalar implicatures is the lateral pre-frontal cortex (Brodmann area 46) and then gauged that the speed and effort in decoding scalar inferences is strongly conditional upon several contextual factors, such as the plausibility of the inference in the context and of the relevant alternatives associated to it.

2.8 Explaining the manipulative impact of implicit strategies between behavioral and neurological evidence

The body of evidence discussed in the previous section hints at more or less consistent findings on the way the brain deals with unexpressed contents in an utterance. Actually, on a closer look, while behavioral data point at decreasing costs when processing contents encoded as presupposition or topic – although not for implicatures and vague expressions – neurophysiological findings reveal opposing trends, in that the cost of presupposition and topic processing vary depending on how expected their use is in a particular context. These distinct patterns of results obviously blur the erstwhile assumption that presupposition and topicalization strategies could be deemed manipulative because they induce a more reduced and less attentive processing. And, what about implicatures? Is their correlation with more demanding processing indicative of their weaker manipulative influence? At the stage at which experimental research on the decoding of implicitly conveyed information has come so far, answering this question is definitely far from straightforward, which is why reflection from the perspective of discourse analysis, epistemology and the sociology of communication cannot altogether be neglected. In fact, one thing is monitoring what happens in the brain when given linguistic structures are processed, one thing is accounting for speakers' criteria and intentions when using such structures.

As for presupposition, a cogent line of reasoning to account for their unchallengeable nature, despite the cognitive costs it may impose in some conditions of sentence processing, comes from Sbisà's (1999) account of presupposition interpretation – hinted at before – in which she suggested to view the tacit acceptance of presupposed content as stemming from a deontic criterion, namely presuppositions "ought to be" taken for granted, whether they are shared or new. I have argued that this sort of obligation is at the basis of the cooperative functioning of new presuppositions in discourse. Receivers are thus compelled to absorb some presupposed information to make the conversation going. So, even if unshared presuppositions can be suspended – as rightfully remarked by von Stechow (2008) – this is in fact hardly the case in ordinary interactions. As a matter of fact, questioning a presupposition would induce the extra unnecessary cost of interrupting the flow of conversation thus bringing its focus to a topic that was less relevant to the communicative task at hand. Besides this, as observed by Sbisà (1999: 12),

this solution is laborious, because it involves a change of topic from what was explicitly at issue to what was merely presupposed, as well as being risky, because it amounts to openly challenging the entitlement of the speaker to issue the utterances he or she has issued, which may once again lead to a breakdown in the communicative relationship.

Also, with a view to preserving our interlocutor's face, since questioning a presupposition may put the hearer in the condition of having contributed to the development of the conversation with some wrong information thus assuming him or her as violating norms of discourse, the hearer is generally likely to avoid this from happening. Therefore, the persuasive power which Sbisà lies at the basis of presupposition use is the fact that if a presupposition is uttered, it must be taken as already shared in order for it to be cooperative in the conversational exchange. These effects of presupposition packaging could well be extended to topicalization as well. In the same vein, then, when some information is topicalized, its content should be taken as already active in the universe of discourse in order for the topicalization process to be considered appropriate in the interaction.

Now, owing to the experimental evidence discussed before, one should surmise that these aspects obtain irrespective of the cost required to mentally represent presupposed and topicalized contents in given syntactic contexts. Indeed, on a closer look, it is reasonable to assume that the maintenance of cooperation is a more compelling parameter than the cost of producing or processing a given structure in communication. Put otherwise, the ultimate purpose of our ordinary interactions is to cooperate with our interlocutors and achieve common goals. Cooperation may sometimes impose greater costs but also leaves space for effort-saving choices. Translated into more relevant terms for our discussion, even if a greater cost is imposed on the receiver to accommodate a new presupposition or a new item of information being topicalized in discourse, he or she straightway adds that information in the common ground so as to keep cooperation unaltered. So, expectations of cooperativeness do not only concern the computation of implicatures – given that implicatures stem from assuming the speaker's adhering to the cooperation principle – but also involve different information structures of utterances. On this account, a piece of information will be taken as more or less relevant not because it is new or given in discourse, but depending on the type of packaging assigned to it in a message. In Chapter 4, it will be contended that such cooperational constraints on presupposition and topic processing is what makes their interpretation “good enough”. On balance, the packaging-approach to the persuasive power of implicit strategies has both a cognitive and an epistemological basis, in that, not only is the updating of implicitly conveyed contents determined by the packaging features they display and how these influence our attentional processes, but also how standard norms of cooperation guide receivers' decoding strategies and updating mechanisms.

The manipulative evidentiality of implicit communication

*The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits
of the masses is an important element in democratic society.
Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute
an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.*
– Edward Bernays

3.1 Introduction

A domain of investigation that is still the object of much ongoing research is the relation between manipulation and source attribution. Few lines of investigation have in fact brought attention to the fact that the manipulative impact of some pragmatic strategies of implicit communication may also be conditional upon how they contribute to defining the source of the contents negotiated in an interaction as well as the speakers' commitment to their truth. This field of research cuts across the well-known domain of evidentiality and its relation to the pragmatic dimension of communication (Chafe & Nichols 1986; Willett 1988; Faller 2002; Aikhenvald 2004; Saussure 2011). As I will try to point out in the following, this interplay becomes particularly evident when source and commitment modulations become effective strategies of persuasion, as is the case of political discourse and the vast taxonomy of content types characterizing its rhetoric. My intention in this chapter is to shed some light on the way implicit communication can be exploited as an effective manipulative practice by means of modulations of sourceness and commitment degrees of speakers. Prior to this, though, a preliminary reflection on the evidential nature of presupposition, implicature, topicalization and vagueness will come in useful.

3.2 Evidentiality as encoded by presumptive meanings

As is well known from Boas's works (Boas 1900, 1910), evidentiality caught on in earlier linguistic theory as the manifestation of information source and, notably, as a grammatical indicator on how the speaker has come to learn about a given state of affairs. In the Native American languages investigated by Boas (ex. Kwakiutl), this

grammatical value generally appeared as a morphological marker on the verb stem or, sometimes, as an isolated morph. The absence of a developed tradition of studies on evidentiality in Europe made its identification in most European languages less straightforward, also because of their mostly non-agglutinating morphological structure. Thus, evidential values could either be expected to be found as inflections of verbs or nominal stems or as expressed by full lexical units. Another heuristic problem concerned the type of evidential meanings encoded by evidentiality markers. In fact, as Chafe & Nichols proposed in their 1986 miscellaneous work *Evidentiality: The Linguistic Coding of Epistemology*, evidentiality in the world's languages could be of two distinct types. One type, called *narrow*, only refers to the marking of information source; another type, called *broad*, marks the speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of a proposition. Broad evidentiality markers were originally found in the Balkan area (Friedman 1986) in which Albanian, Macedonian and Bulgarian were reported to have evidentials marked through definite and indefinite verbal inflections of past forms, which expressed the speaker's degree of certainty and commitment to a state of affairs. The label "evidential" for this kind of epistemological meaning is not agreed upon by all scholars in this field (see, for example, a more extensive terminological discussion in Aikhenvald 2004), who prefer to entrust the function of expressing commitments to the remit of epistemic modality only. Dwelling on this terminological contention, though, would bring far beyond the purposes of the present volume, which is why I will basically comply with Chafe & Nichols's proposed distinction between narrow and broad evidentiality to account for the property of implicit communication to manipulate through more enhanced or reduced manifestations of speakers' sourceness and commitment degrees in conversation. Before discussing in more detail the type of evidential meaning encoded by each of the four considered strategies of linguistic implicitness, I will first flesh out a few lines on the types of evidential meanings attested in the world's languages.

3.3 Evidential systems: A brief overview

The simplest evidential systems described in typological research differentiate between *direct*, *inferential/conjectural* and *indirect* evidentiality markers (Aikhenvald 2004).

Direct evidentials, also called first-hand evidentials, usually mark some state of affairs as being directly experienced by the speaker. In languages with morphologically-marked evidentiality, this meaning appears as in the following example from Cherokee (Iroquian) (Aikhenvald 2004: 26):

- (1) *wesa u-tlis-łzi*
 cat it-run-FIRST HAND.PAST
 ‘A cat ran (I saw it running)’
- (2) *u-wonis-ezi*
 he-speak-NON.FIRST HAND.PAST
 ‘He spoke (someone told me)’

Inferential evidentiality marks some information as not being directly witnessed by the speaker but as inferrable on the basis of cues available from the context. In (3), examples of evidential markers are given from Wanka Quechua (Aikhenvald 2004: 43).

- (3) *Daañu pawa-shra-si* *ka-ya-n-čhr-ari*
 field finish-PARTITIVE-EVENTIVE be-IMPRF-3-INFER-EMPH
 ‘It (the field) might be completely destroyed (I infer)’

Indirect evidentiality, also known as second-hand evidentiality, marks information which the speaker has acquired from another source and that she is, so to say, “quoting” in her utterance. An example from Tariana (Arawak) is given in (4) (Aikhenvald 2004: 95).

- (4) *Ne-pidana* *diha ita-whyane disa*
 Then-remote.past-report. art canoe-class-foc 3sgnf+go.up
di-nu-pidana
 3sgnf-come-rem-past-report.

Apart from this basic tripartite system, in the world’s languages several other complex paradigms of evidential markers have been attested, some even reaching a six or seven-fold classification of source types. What made current approaches to evidentiality worth studying from the perspective of its interface with other levels of analysis is also the relation that evidentials bear to the micro- and macro-pragmatics of utterance and, particularly, to the encoding of illocutionary acts as well as of different patterns of information structure. This property of evidentials was particularly noticed in some indigenous languages of the Americas such as Cheyenne (Murray 2017) and some languages of the Quechua family (Faller 2002; Hintz & Hintz 2017). For example, for Cheyenne, Murray (2017) observed that the templatic structure usually hosting morphological markers of illocutionary force is the same that expresses evidential values. The overlapping of these two layers of grammatical meanings suggest the affinity between illocutionary and evidential markers in expressing two distinct, but related, epistemological meanings.

Even more compelling is the basis of evidence discussed by Faller (2002) on Cuzco Quechua. She noticed that in this language, evidential markers are rather

carriers of pragmatic meanings of commitment or, as she calls it, of “best possible grounds”. Based on judgments gathered from her Quechua informants, she also noticed that evidentially unmarked plain assertions are generally evaluated as presenting the speaker as having the best possible grounds for a proposition, an interpretation that would also be derived with assertions bearing markers of direct evidentiality. This functional similarity between direct evidentials and assertive (evidentially non-marked) speech acts more distinctly emerges with belief retraction tests, usually revealing the strength with which a speaker commits to the truth of a proposition. She argues that her speakers were on the whole reluctant to accept sentences like (5) and (6),

- (5) #*Para-sha-n, ichaqa mana-n riku-ni-chu*
 Rain-PROG-3 but not-*mi* see-1-NEG
 ‘It is raining, but I do not see it (rain)’
- (6) #*Para-sha-n, ichaqa mana riku-ni-chu*
 Rain-PROG-3 but not see-1-NEG
 ‘It is raining, but I do not see it (rain)’

Since in both cases a strong commitment to the event that “it is raining” is being subsequently denied. Indeed, not only the sentence with *-mi*, namely, with an explicit evidential marker, but also the one without it conveys the epistemic meaning that the speaker believes that proposition to be true, and so any retraction from that belief would appear as epistemically incongruous. One important aspect Faller points up is that while in (5) direct evidentiality is explicitly coded on the morphological structure of the verb, in (6) it is inferred on the basis of the pragmatic meaning associated with assertive speech acts. In other words, that the speaker is directly committing to the state of affairs asserted and that she believes it to be true is derived as an implicature of the speaker’s assumed compliance with the Gricean Principle of Cooperation. On this account, if a speaker uses an assertion, it is reasonable to assume her cooperativeness in believing and committing to the truth of the asserted proposition. Needless to say, this expectation must not be taken as a requirement on the part of the speaker, but rather as a legitimate interpretation derived by the receiver. In other words, the use of an assertion will – by itself – suffice to take the speaker as a believer, even if she does not believe the proposition at all. To flesh out some considerations on the role played by the linguistic “clothing” of information, this can be regarded as the real manipulative power of information packaging; that is, packaging can dispense cues on both knowledge, belief and commitment states of speakers, which eventually define their accountability in an interaction, namely the extent to which the truth of their utterance can be challenged or addressed. I will come back to this point later on in this chapter.

3.3.1 The evidential value of assertion, presupposition and topic

Within the Quechua family, other types of evidential markers, apart from direct, indirect and conjectural evidentials, have been found. Although the terminology adopted to label them is still object of current debates, their function of indicating, respectively, individual and shared knowledge is on the whole more consistent. Evidentials opposing these two distinct states of knowledge have been found in Conchucos Quechua, a variety spoken in central Peru. In this language, apart from the canonical direct, conjectural and indirect evidential markers, another morph is used to signal that some knowledge is being conveyed as mutual information and that the speaker is appealing for mutual consensus on the part of the receiver. In this Quechua variety, this marker is opposed to the marker of direct evidentiality, whose function is to make the receiver aware that a piece of information being negotiated is only possessed by the speaker. An illustration of how these two markers are used is given below (Hintz & Hintz 2017: 6).

- (7) Tsay-pa-**mi** qati-ya-ra-n mama-yki-kuna
That-gen-DIR follow-pl-pst-3 mother-2-pl
'By that route, your ancestors pastured animals' (I affirm)
- (8) Tsay-pa-**cha**: qati-ya-ra-n mama-yki-kuna
That-gen-MUT follow-pl-pst-3 mother-2-pl
'By that route, your ancestors pastured animals' (as we all know)

As can be noticed, while in (7) the speaker is presenting the state of affairs described as only possessed by her, in (8), the same event is presented as already holding in the common ground of the receiver.¹

Although mainly expressed at the phonological level, the meaning encoded by these two types of evidentials can on the whole be paralleled with the pragmatic distinction between presupposition and assertion and, more precisely, with their function of conveying some information respectively as already shared or not shared in a conversation. In fact, signaling some knowledge as already holding or not in the interactants' common ground does not properly inhere in the semantic level of a sentence, but in its pragmatic dimension, which means that evidentiality also has a pragmatic reality, besides an epistemological one.

It stands to reason that assuming the signaling of degrees of sharedness of knowledge to contribute to evidentiality marking in communication also necessarily requires considering a broad notion of evidentiality, that is, the one including

1. Hintz & Hintz (2017: 6): "With *-mi*, the authority for the assertion rests within the speaker's deictic sphere, whereas with *-cha*: the deictic sphere expands to include the speaker plus her conversational participants."

the speaker's commitment to the truth of a statement. Indeed, the repercussions of using an assertion or a presupposition as evidential strategies also concern the scope of epistemic commitment, which is mainly speaker-centered in the case of assertion, but both speaker- and receiver-centered in the case of presupposition. From this viewpoint, the distinction between what Hintz & Hintz (2017) call individual and mutual knowledge does not only involve the particular knowledge state of the speaker, but also her "commitment state". Therefore, markers of individual (or direct) evidentiality inform the addressee that some knowledge is only possessed by the speaker, while with markers of mutual evidentiality the addressee is informed that some information must be taken as shared at the time of utterance. As a tentative proposal, the presupposition-assertion dichotomy could be recast as a pragmatic strategy to convey evidential meanings of mutual knowledge and individual knowledge.

This assumption on the evidential function of assertion and presupposition is, in my view, also buttressed by their behavior when falling within the scope of evidential expressions. We have seen before that a plain assertion can hardly be followed by a belief retraction statement, yet, interestingly enough, this does not only affect Cuzco Quechua assertive sentences, but, seemingly, assertions in any other language. Somewhere else (Masia 2017a, 2017b) I contend that sentences analogous to those in (5) and (6) give rise to similar infelicity effects also in most European languages.

- (9) a. #Sta piovento, ma non ci credo
 b. #Il pleut, mais je n'y crois pas
 c. #Está lloviendo, pero yo no lo creo
 d. #Es regnet, aber das glaube ich nicht

Denying a previous assertion in all these cases would amount to incurring an epistemic contradiction, caused by the fact that a speech act having the pragmatic function of expressing a commitment and belief state of the speaker is followed by a statement that obliterates this pragmatic value, resulting in a non cooperative use of the assertions. Things would appear strikingly different should the assertions be embedded in the scope of an indirect evidential, as shown in (10).

- (10) a. Mi hanno detto che sta piovento, ma non ci credo
 b. On m'a dit qu'il pleut, mais je n'y crois pas
 c. Me han dicho que está lloviendo, pero yo no lo creo
 d. Ich habe gehört dass es regnet, aber das glaube ich nicht

Here, the attribution of the proposition "it is raining" to a third person's epistemic territory (Kamio 1997) allows the speaker to detach from the truth of it. With conjectural evidentials, this conversational move is a little more constrained due to the fact that the speaker is deemed on the whole responsible for the conjectures she

makes. On balance, at the basis of assertion resistance to belief retraction statements is the fact that assertive acts generally package knowledge that is to be considered as *individual*, and therefore does not allow for “second thoughts” on the asserted proposition.

The behavior of presupposition with respect to evidentiality encoding in a sentence is just as interesting, yet not so deeply explored so far. What characterizes presupposition is that, differently than assertion, it cannot easily be combined with evidential adverbs or predicates. More precisely, a piece of presupposed information cannot fall within the syntactic scope of an evidential without engendering infelicity effects. Consider the examples in (11) and (12).

- (11) #When Mary [*probably*] went to the party, a fire had burnt out next to her house
 (12) #It’s a pity that [*it seems*] Colin has decided to leave!

As can be noticed, the presuppositional status of the temporal subordinate clause in (11) and of the factive-dependent clause in (12) makes their combination with evidential expressions somewhat odd, given that the pragmatic function of presupposition is to take the truth of some information for granted and shared by both interlocutors, while the evidential adverbs in (11) and (12) carry a meaning of uncertainty and conjectural inference. So, the fact that presupposition sets some information as mutually shared by participants in a conversation blocks any modulation of commitment states since commitment to some presupposed content is, so to say, already endorsed by both speaker and receiver in the interaction. Similarly to the Conchucos Quechua examples in (7) and (8), presupposition packaging can be recast as a pragmatic strategy for conveying meanings of mutual evidentiality and, in this function, it establishes some knowledge as appealing to the interlocutors’ mutual consensus in the ongoing exchange. Besides a shared commitment, mutual evidentiality would also be indicative of a shared sourceness, in that both speaker and receiver are qualified as sources of the content presupposed. Later on in this chapter I will seek to explain why the way presupposition and assertion manipulate attribution of sources and commitments strongly impinges upon the manipulative nature of some information.

The functional affinity between presupposition and topic – at least in terms of presenting some information as already active or shared up to a certain point in the conversation – is also observed in relation to evidentiality encoding. As information unit outside the scope of illocutionary force, topic is not affected by modulations of commitment degrees. Consider the following cases.

- (13) #[If you study hard]_T [you will pass the exam]_F, but I don’t believe it
 (14) #[For her birthday, Mary wants a new]_T [TABLE]_F, not a microwave, but I don’t believe it

Intuitively, the kind of incongruity that emerges from the sentences above is on the whole comparable with the assertive examples discussed before. Notably, the retraction statement would refer not to the topical but to the focal unit of the sentence. So, in (13) the speaker does not believe that the addressee might pass the exam (studying hard), while in (14) she believes that Mary bought a microwave, but not a table. It thus seems that a belief retraction is generally interpreted as involving the focal and not the topical part of a sentence, being this latter aimed at presenting some information as already active in the current universe of discourse. However, also for these two sentence types, the speaker's retraction from the focused information is in any case perceived as odd, owing to the fact that focus is the unit of information structure conveying the illocutionary force of the sentence and to which the speaker commits the most. This means that, as we have seen for assertion, also focus does not allow subsequent detachment from its truth; and, similarly to assertion, the syntactic embedding of a focused unit (whatever its length) in the scope of indirect evidential expressions, makes belief retraction more acceptable.

- (15) They say that [if you study hard]_T [you will pass the exam]_F,
but I don't believe it
- (16) They told me that [for her birthday, Mary wants a new]_T [TABLE]_F,
not a microwave, but I don't believe it

The attribution of the propositions to a different source makes belief retraction on the whole more felicitous, yet always affecting the focus unit only, which means that contents realized as topics fall outside the scope of evidential marking. In terms of types of evidential meanings expressed, I suggest viewing topic and focus as paralleling presupposition and assertion: resistance to belief retraction for focus hinges on the fact that focal information is usually conveyed by the speaker as not already belonging to the background knowledge of the receiver, and therefore as speaker's individual knowledge. By the same token, topic conveys information as already introduced in discourse and therefore as retrievable from the receiver's short-term memory at utterance time. The hypothesis I put forward is therefore to look at the topic-focus dichotomy as another pragmatic strategy of evidentiality encoding, with topic packaging carrying meanings of mutual evidentiality and focus carrying meanings of individual evidentiality. It stands to reason that the distinction between individual and mutual evidentiality is not present in all languages. However, the fact that dedicated markers of "mutual knowledge" can be found is, to some extent, indicative of the relation that the "sharedness" status of knowledge bears on the grammatical encoding of evidentiality (see also discussion on the use of evidentials as "factuality markers" in Japanese, Ohta 1991, and of visual evidentials as markers conveying the state of jointly-perceived experience in Maaka, Aikhenvald 2015).

In what follows, I will try to set out the relation that implicature and vagueness hold with the expression of information sources and commitment in an interaction.

3.3.2 The evidential value of implicature and vagueness

If presupposition and topic clearly mark some information as shared up to a certain point in the conversation – and thus indicate that the responsibility for the truth of that information is also mutually shared – implicatures instead resemble assertive speech acts, in that they are intended to add new content to the common ground and this new content belongs to the speaker’s epistemic territory (Kamio 1997) only. Yet, differently than plain assertions, implicatures impose reconstructing the speaker’s sourceness and communicative responsibility via inferential paths. Put another way, in conveying an intentional meaning as implicature, the speaker is always identified as the committed source of a proposition, but the receiver must rely on a set of contextual coordinates and evaluations to assess which intentional meaning (among the many that can be derived) could be more relevantly attributed to the speaker’s informative goal in the communicative task at hand. So, in the dialogue in (17)

- (17) A: Are you coming to Lisa’s party?
 B: I have to finish my report

Speaker B’s commitment to a denial is not textually available information, but an inferred one. Of course, B also commits to the fact that she has to finish her report but, since this is not the expected cooperative reply to A’s question, the implied denial is the proposition for which responsibility and commitment degrees should be reckoned. The evidentiality conveyed by implicatures is thus less direct, since the receiver must do her part to trace back what the speaker’s source is. Generally speaking, we could call it an *attenuated direct evidentiality*, because part of the reconstruction of the evidential meaning (and therefore of the speaker’s source and degree of commitment to truth) is entrusted to the receiver.² Needless to say, this mechanics leaves some degree of subjective variability, given that, in some contexts, the recipient may fail to reconstruct the exact intentional meaning of the speaker. This is often the case of indirect messages which, in a given context, can receive more than one plausible interpretation. By way of illustration, consider the short exchange in (18), taken from Sperber & Wilson (1986):

- (18) A: Do you want some coffee?
 B: It would keep me awake

2. I prefer not to use the term “indirect evidentiality” to refer to the evidential values encoded by implicature and vagueness because they do not involve reported information. Nor do I assume the label “conjectural evidentiality” to properly grasp the phenomena at stake since a conjecture here is not being carried out by the speaker – who deliberately opts for a less direct strategy even when a more direct one would be available – but it is a task assigned to the receiver.

As can be noticed, B's reply to A's offer exploits the Maxim of Relation to convey an apparently irrelevant answer to the question. Now, the implicature generated by B's utterance can give rise to at least two distinct interpretations, which can be formulated as (1) *Yes, I need some coffee to stay awake while I drive back home*, or (2) *No, I'd better not take any coffee because I'm about to go to sleep*. Now, on a closer look, in a context in which A and B have finished dining together, both implicatures would be relevant indeed, which increases the likelihood that A might not catch the actually implied one. So, in attenuating her commitment to a direct reply, B also risks to lead A astray since the context does not help unraveling which under-encoded meaning is being indirectly conveyed by her. Implying contents is thus one way to reduce the directness of a sentence's evidentiality, but also a way to call upon the receiver's participation to build evidential meanings in discourse, taking on the necessary responsibility for guessing the correct meaning to attribute to the speaker's source and committal attitude. This is why, when it comes to persuasive communication, implicatures prove to be evidentially more manipulative than direct assertions. With assertions the speaker straightway commits to the truth of a proposition and shows to have adequate evidence to endorse its truth, whereas with implicatures truth is, so to say, jointly built by interlocutors.

To a certain extent, analogous views could be extended to vagueness as well. As a matter of fact, in leaving part of their meaning unexpressed, vague expressions impose the receiver to get the speaker's intended meaning via inferential calculation. Let us take Example (18) of Chapter 2, again from Obama's speech (2017), here recalled as (19).

- (19) ...change only happens when ordinary people get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it.

In Chapter 2, we characterized this string of text as vague because Obama does not clarify in what the American people should get involved or engaged, and what they are supposed to demand. Some relevant complements are left hidden and should ad hoc be construed by the addressee. As I will argue in Chapter 5, vagueness determined by the omission of verb arguments is a recurrent discourse strategy when the speaker does not want to put her face on delicate issues. As it happens with implicatures, vagueness reduces the degree of speaker sourceness and commitment to the truth of a state of affairs; in this sense, the receiver's contribution will do the rest to complete and trace more definite semantic boundaries of the vague linguistic units coded. Therefore, vagueness weakens the directness of an utterance's evidential meaning and gets the speaker "under cover" when she does not want to publicly endorse a potentially controversial statement.

Table 1 summarizes the evidential properties of the four implicit strategies discussed so far along with their explicit counterparts.

Table 1. Evidential properties of implicit and explicit discourse strategies

Discourse strategy	Direct evidentiality	Attenuated direct evidentiality	Mutual evidentiality
<i>Assertion</i>	It commits the speaker to a proposition and signifies that <i>she has adequate evidence to qualify as its source.</i>		
<i>Focus</i>	It indicates that some content is being conveyed as the speaker's illocutionary aim and thus as content <i>she commits to the most.</i>		
<i>Presupposition</i>	It presents some knowledge as <i>mutually shared</i> and for which both speaker and receiver <i>are held responsible and are both qualified as source.</i>		
<i>Topic</i>	It marks some information as <i>already introduced in the current discourse</i> and whose truth is <i>mutually agreed upon</i> up to a certain point in the conversation.		
<i>Implicature</i>	It signals that some content is to be attributed to the speaker's source and commitment but <i>in a less direct way</i> because it must be tracked down via <i>inferential assessment.</i>		
<i>Vagueness</i>	It also endows some expression with a <i>less direct evidentiality</i> given that the speaker's intentional meaning is not fully expressed; so, the speaker must reckon what it is through <i>contextual inferencing.</i>		

3.4 Presupposition, assertion and their evidential meaning in political discourse

The analysis I would like to present in the following moves from the above premises to gauge how the evidential nature of implicit linguistic strategies can be exploited to devote their use to the encoding of specific content types.³

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the study of the types of contents conveyed by politicians in their messages gained increasing importance within research of political communication on SNS. In Chapter 2 (Section 2.5) I pointed at quantitative approaches on the study of implicit communication on social networks and the contents which are often associated either with presuppositions or implicatures in political tweets. The data I will discuss below come from an inquiry on the way politicians select discourse strategies, mainly presupposition and assertion, according to the type of meaning they want to convey. Taking a cross-linguistic perspective, the proposed research aims at analyzing this correlation in traditional speeches of Italian, French and English politicians. Prior to a more detailed description of the corpus, a brief recall of the outline of the types of contents considered for the survey will come in useful.⁴ The seminal studies who first elaborated this taxonomy report the following four content types as the most widespread and recurrent in political propaganda, either in traditional speeches and in more recent means of mass communication (Facebook, Twitter, etc., see data discussed in Chapter 2).

- **ATTACK**: criticism of unfavorable characteristics or flaws of a political opponent or group (Lee & Xu 2018);
- **SELF-PRAISE**: a positive statement about oneself or one's own policy (Dayter 2014)
- **STANCE-TAKING**: expression of one's position or stand on a particular issue (Evans 2016)
- **NEUTRAL**: message providing objective information or agenda announcements (Graham et al. 2013)

Building on the definitions given above, I propose to further differentiate between the four categories of contents on the basis of another parameter which I deem crucial to better inspect their correlation with distinct discourse strategies, namely, their *challengeability* degree. Similarly to the use I made of this term before, with

3. The research presented in this section is also more extensively described in Masia (2020).

4. The labels chosen to refer to each content type may not be the most suitable and univocal but reflect some earlier established works on this matter.

“challengeability” I herein refer to the likelihood that some content may threaten the addressee’s face (Goffman 1981), thus raising his critical reaction (Givón 1982). This type of challengeability thus opposes – yet, as we will see, strongly interacts with – to the challengeability bearing upon presupposition and assertion packaging. We have seen that presupposition allows taking some information for granted and keeping it from being challenged by the interlocutor. Assertion, on the contrary, opens a proposition to potential challenge as it makes the speaker’s commitment to it stronger and more explicit.

The outline provided by the mainstream literature for the above content types allows predicting their challengeability degree in the following terms. Lee & Xu (2018) have defined Attack as focusing on an issue on which the speaker claims higher credibility but on which the opponent is generally weaker. As a matter of fact, attacking messages in political discourse usually have the function of emphasizing flaws and unfavourable characteristics of a political opponent. This conception may of course get irremediably enhanced in people with little political knowledge, i.e. with those who are less vigilant to potentially distorted information. Given the main purpose of Attack of inducing political voters to think negatively of an opponent and become convinced of the speaker’s reliability, this strongly threatening and addressee-oriented nature of attack is what makes its challengeability stronger. In fact, for intuitively persuasive reasons, the speaker may lie about a political opponent thus smearing his or her reputation. Self-praise is another recurring type of content in political discourse. Brown & Levinson (1987) characterize it as a fairly strong face-threatening act because it involves the raising of the self and the lowering of the other (from Dayter 2014: 96). Moreover, in praising herself, the speaker shows to have little care about the hearer’s feelings. Self-praising also stems from a non-observance of the Modesty Maxim theorized by Leech (Leech 1983: 132), which rules that to achieve politeness in an interaction, the speaker should “minimize the expression of praise of self and maximize the expression of dispraise of self”. Similarly to attack, self-praising may involve untrue contents as well, in that the speaker may subtly instil a positive impression of herself in the voters’ minds. In this sense, self-praising can be considered to have a high challengeability degree, yet less challengeable than Attack as this latter more strongly impacts and threatens a third person’s reputation.

Further down the challengeability ladder are Stance-taking and Neutral contents. Bucholtz & Hall (2005) describe stance-taking as both a subjective and an intersubjective process, as it allows the speaker to re-affirm his own identity and adherence to the ideological tenets of a (political) group. Strengthening one’s stance on a given issue reinforces the politician’s bond to the ideology of his/her group. In a way, politicians’ stances on different issues can be on the whole predicted,

should one be aware of the views and tenets of a political party. In this sense, a Republican leader like Donald Trump saying: “Immigration flows should be controlled more rigorously” is simply restating his own ideological position on immigration. Differently than the former two content types, with stance-taking information, assuming the speaker’s expression of a belief or opinion on something to elude some form of veracity is on the whole less likely, since, if this were the case, she would take on a contradictory conversational move towards his own credibility. For this reason, the challengeability of stance-taking contents can be considered weaker than for attacking and self-praising ones, being these latter more likely to be untrue when subtle manipulative intents are to be fulfilled. Neutral contents are probably the least challengeable at all, owing to their relation with objective and generally factual information.

Now, capitalizing on the above considerations, I suggest to recast the challengeability degree of attacking, self-praising, stance-taking and neutral content types in the following gradient:



Moving from this conception, the challengeability parameter could therefore be split into two distinct layers, one inhering in the level of content types (*content challengeability*), one associated with their packaging features (*packaging challengeability*), these latter either represented by presupposition or assertion strategies. Given the properties of presupposition and assertion to respectively reduce and increase speaker’s commitment to a proposition, I expect the relation between content types and packaging strategies to be inversely proportional, in that more challengeable content types are expected to be encoded by a less challengeable packaging strategy, i.e. presupposition; conversely, less challengeable types of content are expected to be encoded through a more challengeable packaging strategy, namely assertion. This scenario can be explained as follows. It can be thought that the speaker feels less confident in committing to potentially doubtful information, given that this could put her reputation and that of her opponent at risk. As a matter of fact, the politician may boast herself about things she has not done at all and, in the same way, she may attack other people on things they are in no way accountable for. The use of presupposition is however an effective means through which more challengeable content types are made less challengeable because they are presented as already shared by the receiver, who is in turn less prone to address its truth. Conversely, a politician may be expected to resort to assertive strategies to convey stance-taking

and neutral content types, given their weaker tendentiousness and less probable association with less doubtful contents. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that the speaker does not have much to lose in just stating her opinion on something or reporting factual information; so, adopting a more committal attitude in conveying these content types would not constitute a burdensome epistemic cost.

All this reasoning does not obviously leave the contribution of evidentiality aside. Rather, I assume that the rationale behind choosing a presupposition or an assertion to communicate a given type of content precisely bears on their evidential properties argued before. As pragmatic strategy of mutual evidentiality, presupposition automatically places some content in the epistemic territory of both speaker and receiver; in so doing, it also qualifies the receiver as source of that content as well. As already quoted from Mazzarella et al. (2018: 18), interlocutors share the responsibility for what is presupposed in a conversation. By the same token, assertion identifies some information as falling within the speaker's epistemic domain only, which means that only the speaker is responsible for its truth. So, while the accountability of the speaker can be more easily addressed for contents packaged as assertions, presupposition packaging would tie both interlocutors to the truth of a proposition, therefore any challenging reaction on the part of the receiver would eventuate in an uncooperative interactional move.

On balance, taking the low challengeability of presupposition to hinge on its meaning of mutual evidentiality, and the high challengeability of assertion to be driven by its meaning of individual (direct) evidentiality, we can sketch the *packaging challengeability-content challengeability* interaction as in Figure 7.

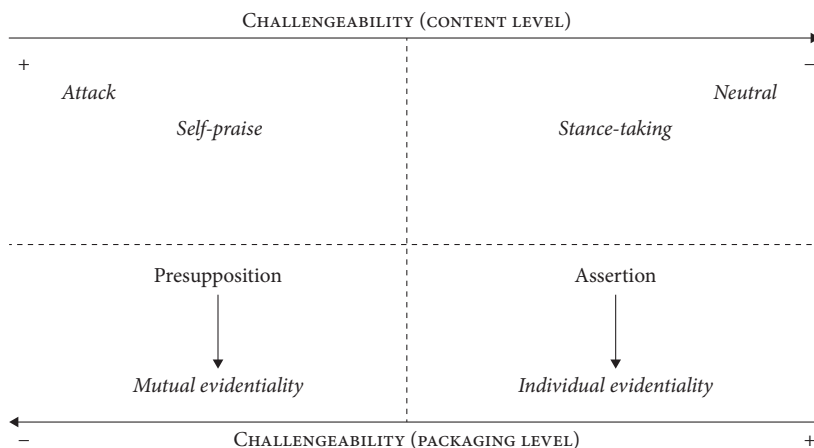


Figure 7. Levels of interactions between content challengeability and packaging challengeability

The clines pointing to opposing directions indicate that an increase in the challengeability degree of a *content* type correlates with the decreasing challengeability of the *packaging* strategy, and viceversa. The data to be discussed in the following section will seek to buttress this prediction.

3.4.1 Corpus

As hinted at in the previous section, the analysis intends to assess the use that politicians make of presupposition and assertion in association with the four content types. To this end, I have collected 37 speeches for a total of 102.211 words. The corpus comprises U.S. French and Italian speeches held between 2014 and 2017. Two politicians have been considered for each country: *Barack Obama* (Democrats) and *Hillary Clinton* (Democrats) for the U.S.A. *François Hollande* (Parti Socialiste) and *Marine Le Pen* (Front National) for France, and *Matteo Renzi* (at that time, Democratic Party) and *Matteo Salvini* (The League) for Italy. A more detailed word count of the corpus gathered for each country is reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Composition of the corpus

Country	Politicians	Extension (n. words)
U.S.A.	<i>Barack Obama</i>	31.274
	<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	
France	<i>François Hollande</i>	36.167
	<i>Marine Le Pen</i>	
Italy	<i>François Hollande</i>	34.770
	<i>Marine Le Pen</i>	
Total		102.211

The first step in the analysis consisted in annotating all speeches for the packaging strategy instantiated, i.e. presupposition or assertion and, secondly, the type of content being conveyed (Attack, Self-praise, Stance-taking and Neutral). For assertions, the region of interest was represented by declarative independent propositions, while for presupposition, the information encoded within the syntactic domain of the trigger has been taken into account. A few examples will make this criterion clearer.

REGIONS OF INTEREST FOR ASSERTION

- [*Noi siamo abituati a confrontarci in modo non formale*]_{ASS} (Renzi 2014)
'We are used to discussing in an informal way'
- [*Our economy isn't working the way it should*]_{ASS} (Clinton 2016)
- [*43 million workers have no paid sick leave*]_{ASS} (Obama 2015)

- d. *Ils sont le fait d'une armée djihadiste, le groupe Daech qui nous combat parce que [la France est un pays de liberté]_{ASS}* (Hollande 2015)
'It is a jihadist army, the Daech group, that struggles against us because France is a country of freedom'

REGIONS OF INTEREST FOR PRESUPPOSITION

- a. [*When the other side refuses to compromise*]_{PRES}, *progress can stall* (Obama 2016)
- b. *I believe that here in America our success should depend on [the strength of our work ethic]_{PRES}* (Obama 2016)
- c. *Let's continue that progress with a smarter tax policy that [stops giving \$ 4 billion a year to fossil fuel industries that don't need it]_{PRES}* (Obama 2014)
- d. *Ecco perché, quando sento parlare di mafia, [con la leggerezza con cui anche questa mattina è risuonata questa parola]_{PRES}, avverto un brivido di dolore* (Renzi 2014)
'This is why, when I hear people talking about Mafia, with the shallowness with which also this morning this word has been mentioned, I feel a painful thrill.'
- e. *L'occasione est trop belle pour ne pas, aujourd'hui, rendre hommage aussi à travers elles à toutes les femmes de France qui, aujourd'hui, se lèvent pour [continuer ce combat lumineux de la transmission et de l'amour de la Nation]_{PRES}* (Le Pen 2015)
'The opportunity is too beautiful to not pay a tribute, today, also through her to all women of France who, today, raise to continue their bright struggle for the transmission and the love of the Nation.'

Of course, the speeches selected for the corpus did not all have the same length so, in order to ensure more balanced datasets, 300 tokens have been selected for each content type, for a total of 1.200 occurrences for the whole corpus. Moreover, to make sure that all political characters were equally represented, 200 total occurrences of Content Types (henceforth, CT) have been extracted. Table 3 displays the structure of the final corpus used.

Table 3. Final corpus used for the analysis

CT	U.S.A.		Tot. CTs country	FRANCE		Tot. CTs country	ITALY		Tot. CTs country	Tot. CTs
	Barack Obama	Hillary Clinton		François Hollande	Marine Le Pen		Matteo Renzi	Matteo Salvini		
<i>Attack</i>	50	50	100	50	50	100	50	50	100	
<i>Self-praise</i>	50	50	100	50	50	100	50	50	100	
<i>Stance-taking</i>	50	50	100	50	50	100	50	50	100	
<i>Neutral</i>	50	50	100	50	50	100	50	50	100	
Totals	200	200	400	200	200	400	200	200	400	1.200

The reason of the prior annotation of packaging strategies hanged on the necessity to detect more clear-cut boundaries of the relevant strings of information. Due to politicians' frequent recourse to digressions, syntactically incomplete sentences, incidental phrases, hesitations, etc., a prior annotation based on the syntactic boundaries of the content types expressed would have made the mapping of content types onto one or the other packaging strategy much less straightforward a task. This means that, in some cases, the presuppositions and assertions found in the corpus therefore instantiate parts of larger CT units whose boundaries were not always univocally determined. The ultimate purpose of this criterion was that the relevant assertive or presuppositional unit could be uniquely categorized as conveying either one or the other content type.

After annotating all speeches, the frequency of association between different types of content and presupposition or assertion packaging was obtained following the algorithm below:

$$\frac{\text{Single occurrence of CT} \wedge \text{pres/ass packaging strategy}}{\text{Total n. of occurrences of CT}}$$

The correlation of each CT and its packaging as presupposition or as assertion is divided by the total number of CT occurrences. What results from this ratio will indicate how frequently a presupposition or an assertion is used by the politician to code a given CT. For the purposes of the proposed analysis, I will refer to this parameter as *frequency coefficient* (FC). So, for example, if, on a total of 150 occurrences of Attack, 53 receive presupposition packaging, this means that 35% of the attacking contents of the corpus are conveyed as taken for granted information and, correspondingly, as marked with a meaning of mutual evidentiality. The remaining 97 occurrences (65% of the total) will be expressed assertively, that is, with a meaning of individual (direct) evidentiality.

3.4.2 Predictions

Based on the working hypotheses formulated in the previous section, I expect the interplay of the Packaging and CT variables to be contingent on the challengeability parameter discussed before. More precisely, in epitomizing a less challengeable discourse strategy, presupposition is expected to correlate more frequently with highly challengeable CTs (i.e. Attack and Self-praise). On the contrary, as a more challengeable discourse strategy, assertion is expected to correlate more frequently with weakly challengeable CTs (i.e. Stance-taking and Neutral). So, as a rule of

thumb, politicians should be more inclined to opt for a more implicit communicative strategy to convey contents more strongly impacting on their or on someone else's reputation and which may involve dubious or potentially false information. On the other hand, they should be more likely to select explicit strategies to communicate contents less probably involving untrue information and less strongly impacting the politician or someone else's reputation. To gauge these trends, I will thus consider the FC value for the four content types as an indication of the politician's preferred discourse and evidential strategy to encode more or less challengeable types of information.

3.4.3 Results

In this section, I will report the calculated and graphicated FC values associated to presupposition and assertion for the whole corpus of 1.200 items (Figure 8) and for each country separately (Figures 9–11).

Table 4. Frequency coefficients for all CTs

CT	PRESUPPOSITION	ASSERTION
<i>Attack</i>	*0.63	0.36
<i>Self-praise</i>	*0.76	0.23
<i>Stance-taking</i>	0.11	*0.89
<i>Neutral</i>	0.15	*0.86

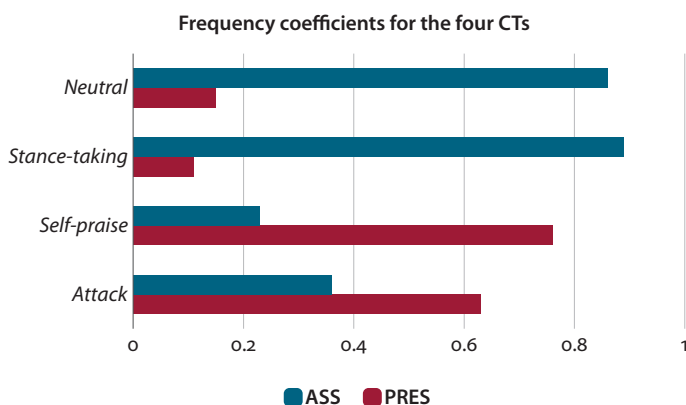


Figure 8. Frequency coefficients of the four CTs for presupposition and assertion

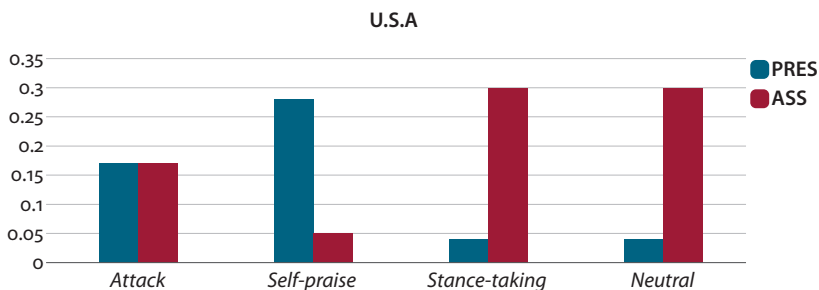


Figure 9. Frequency coefficients for English speeches

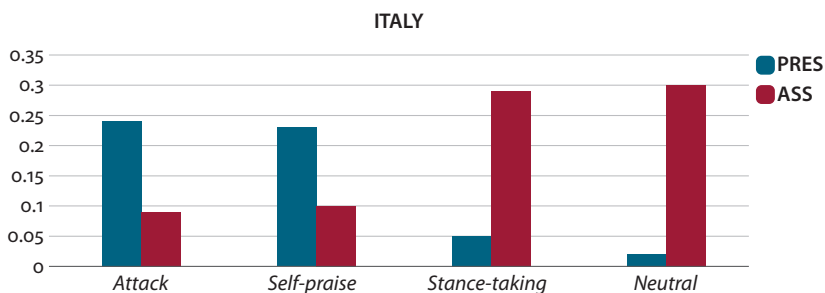


Figure 10. Frequency coefficients for Italian speeches

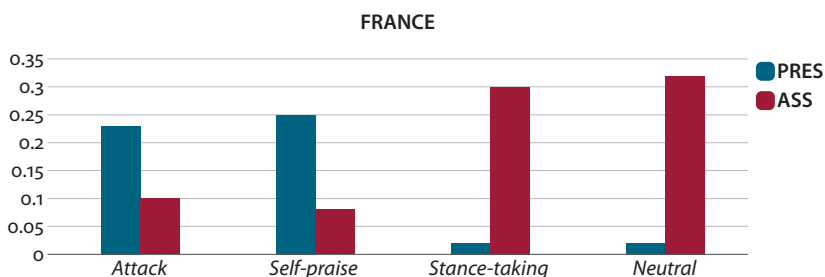


Figure 11. Frequency coefficients for French speeches

As can be noticed, the FC values shown in Figure 2 indicate striking differences in the distribution of Attacking, Self-praising, Stance-taking and Neutral contents between presuppositional and assertive strategies, as also revealed by statistical measures ($t = 4.36$, p -value = 0.003).

In the gathered corpus, the most recurrent use of assertion is to express Stance-taking contents, followed by Neutral, Attacking and Self-praising ones. These trends appear particularly noticeable in the U.S. and French speeches, while for Italian, presupposition is more strongly associated with Attack, with a slightly

less remarkable difference between presupposition and assertion strategies for Self-praising contents. Three one-sample t-tests run for the datasets collected for the three countries reveal that the significance in the different distribution of presupposition and assertion packaging among the four CTs is consistent for the three countries (U.S.A.: $t = 4.12$, p -value = 0.004; Italy: $t = 4.18$, p -value = 0.004; France: $t = 3.77$, p -value = 0.006).

On balance, politicians can be deemed to be more leaning towards strategies of mutual evidentiality (aiming at setting a shared responsibility in the communicative interaction) for self-boasting contents, and towards committing more strongly (thus expressing an individual responsibility of the speaker) for contents whose function is to strengthen the speaker's ideological stance or to inform the audience about events or agenda announcements. Some further remarks on the gleaned results are fleshed out in the section below.

3.4.4 Discussion

In this study, I wanted to inquire how the evidential function of presupposition and assertion – that is, the grammaticalization of mutual and individual evidentiality meanings, respectively – influenced the use of these two strategies in political discourse. Needless to say, the way politicians speak is replete with conversational moves targeted at persuading and manipulating the audience. At the basis of these moves are complex perspective-taking mechanisms and modulations of commitment degrees. Moving from Fox's assumption that evidence and evidentiality are inextricably tied to political relationships among participants in an interaction (Fox 2001), I thought that political discourse may represent a fertile testing ground to probe into the way(s) evidential meanings are built in discourse and what pragmatic strategies politicians rely on to express them. The interplay of the presupposition-assertion dichotomy and evidentiality encoding (particularly a broad type of evidentiality, Chafe & Nichols 1986) has been gauged recasting these two units of information structure as markers of two distinct epistemic stances in conversation. Notably, we have pointed out that the mutual evidentiality encoded by presupposition indicates a more shared commitment to some information on the part of both speaker and receiver. I have argued that this behavior hinges on the property of presupposition packaging to place some information in the epistemic territory of all participants in an interaction. This is what makes presupposed information, so to say, "watertight" to possible addressability, because in challenging some content which she also believes to be true, the receiver would take on an uncooperative communicative behavior. We have seen in Chapter 2 how this addressability-resistant attitude of presupposition has fairly consistent

experimental bases (cf., for example, Amaral & Cummins 2015). The frequency coefficients obtained from the analyses substantiate my previous prediction that contents which are more face-threatening for the speaker or for a political rival are likely to be packaged as presupposition. An a priori consideration that can be made looking at these trends is that politicians seem to follow the general argumentative rule that when some content may smear her reputation in the opinion of the electorate, it is better to make voters likewise responsible for that content, yet without making them aware of this. We have seen before that one of the reasons why presupposition can be an effective means to achieve this purpose is also the way it directs mental processes in sentence comprehension (see experimental findings in Chapter 2). So, besides degrees of epistemic commitment, the pragmatic evidentiality encoded by presupposition and assertion also has its own (yet still not fully defined) psychological correlates.

The calculated frequency coefficients also back up the prediction of a strong association between assertive packaging and weakly challengeable content types. The weak challengeability attributed to Stance-taking and Neutral contents has been explained as a generally intuitive tendency of politicians to have scant, if any, persuasive needs in simply expressing opinions or agenda announcements. Since he has nothing to lose nor to gain in conveying these types of contents, the politician feels more confident in committing to their truth. Indeed, as already argued before, lying about one's own stance or fixed agenda plans would amount to appearing uncooperative, let alone disavowing his identity as member of a political group. Since Stance-taking and Neutral contents positively interact with the speaker and receiver's face, a stronger commitment expressed by the use of an assertive speech act would not risk compromising the speaker's credibility. We have said that with presupposition, the epistemic condition of mutual commitment correlates with attention-reduction mechanisms; with assertion, instead, a stronger speaker commitment finds a possible correlate in a greater attentional effort. Therefore, evidentially-speaking, the speaker's marking some knowledge as individual or as belonging to her personal experience (Mushin 2001) provides cues to more thorough processing to be carried out by the receiver.

Another interesting aspect further emerges from the obtained results. A larger difference between Self-Praise and Attack in the use of presupposition can be appreciated, as compared to the difference between Neutral and Stance-taking in the use of assertion. I will seek to couch this dissimilarity in the following terms. Brown & Levinson (1986) describe Self-praise as bringing about at least two communicative acts: one, more explicit, aimed at expressing self-flattering information, the other, more implicit, hinting at a minimization of the receiver or of other addressees. This characteristic of self-praising contents is more clearly exemplified by the occurrence below from Marine Le Pen's speech (2016).

- (20) J'appelle en ce premier mai tous les patriotes de France, d'où qu'ils viennent, quel que soit leur engagement politique passé, à me rejoindre. Qu'il rejoigne **le seul parti qui sait où il va**, pourquoi il y va, et qui ne s'embarrasse pas de ces querelles d'égos, qui reste sur le fond des projets, qui propose une voie aux Français!

In (20), the restrictive relative clause *le seul parti qui sait où il va* ('the one party who knows where to go') takes for granted that there is only one party who knows where to go. Furthermore, through an implicature, it is also conveyed that this party is the Front National; accordingly, other parties as yet have never known where to go.

Another case is epitomized by the following excerpt from Obama's 2016 speech.

- (21) What was true then can be true now. **Our unique strength as a nation, our optimism and work ethic, our spirit of discovery, our diversity, our commitment to rule of law** – these things give us everything we need to ensure prosperity and security for generations to come.

What happens here is that not only do the definite descriptions bold-typed in the text presuppose that the United States of America have a unique strength as a nation, optimism and work ethic, a spirit of discovery, diversity and commitment to rule of law, but the reiteration of the possessive adjective *our* also gives the idea that all these qualities are not equally matched by other countries. The contribution of implicature to getting across the speaker's intention to praise herself downgrading others is fairly noticeable also in this case. In fact, on a closer look, it is safe to assume that any nation has a unique strength that is different from other nations, and that any nation had some spirit of discovery in the past. Moreover, any population has law-abiding citizens and people who are more prone to flout the rules. On this account, Obama's manipulative intent cannot be thought to involve stating mere truisms; rather, the actual informative goal of his message and, particularly, of the definite phrases he uttered is that Americans are endowed with those qualities in a special way, what persuades his recipients that being American is something to be proud of.

The effect of presupposition packaging on the degree of challengeability of some content is also remarkable on attacking CTs. By way of illustration, consider the sentences in (22) and (23) and their reformulation in (22a) and (23a).

- (22) **Le décisions arbitraires du ministère** finissent par exaspérer des professionnels, qui ont l'impression qu'on essaie de les court-circuiter. (Le Pen 2016)
- (22a) **Le ministère a pris des décisions arbitraires** et ceux-ci finissent par exaspérer des professionnels, qui ont l'impression qu'on essaie de les court-circuiter.
- (23) **When Congress is dysfunctional** we should draw our districts to encourage politicians to cater to common sense and not rigid extremes. (Obama 2017)
- (23a) **Congress can be dysfunctional.** That's why we should draw our districts to encourage politicians to cater to common sense and not rigid extremes.

In (22), that ministries have made arbitrary choices is presented as taken-for-granted information through recourse to a definite description (*Le décisions arbitraires du ministère*), while in (22a) the same piece of information is provided in an assertive way (*Le ministère a pris des décisions arbitraires*) and, correspondingly, as a more relevant and purposeful information unit. In the same way, in (23), the dysfunctionality of Congress is conveyed as already shared information, while in (23a), it is proffered to the addressee as something she does not know yet. An immediate effect that clearly emerges from the above comparisons is that in using presuppositional strategies in (22) and (23) the receiver is, so to say, subtly induced to reconstruct her mental model of discourse by tacitly accepting the propositions taken for granted. In a psychological perspective, presupposition surreptitiously puts the recipient in the condition of “knowing” those states of affairs prior to utterance time, what reduces the chance that she might be willing to inquire their truth. Conversely, in hearing (22a) and (23a), the recipient takes those contents as not belonging to his epistemic domain yet, and thus needing a more thorough evaluation.

The frequency coefficient values obtained for Stance-taking and Neutral contents substantiate the hypothesis that assertive packaging, and thus a pragmatic strategy of individual evidentiality, is on the whole preferred for these CTs. The trends shown in Section 3.3.3 display a more recurrent use of presupposition with Neutral contents. Among other things, this behavior can be put down to the need to take for granted information that is less relevant to the purpose of a message, which accordingly allows the speaker to focus on other information units. It must be highlighted, though, that the use of presupposition in association with this type of content is overall more feeble, which means that the speaker is on the whole more prone to increase the receiver’s level of attention – using an assertion – on contents requiring a deeper critical evaluation.

On balance, the results gleaned from this study buttress a fairly strongly content-oriented use of presupposition and assertion in the political discourses examined. At first blush, these data can be taken to reveal a general sensitivity of speakers to produce their messages considering the effects that some discourse strategies may have on the mental encoding of the types of contents being negotiated. Lambrecht (1994) argues that information structure reflects “the speaker’s assumption about the hearer’s state of knowledge and awareness at the time of an utterance” (Lambrecht 1994: xiii); however, I take this property to be less compelling when it comes to messages with persuasive aims. In fact, looking at political communication, the informational articulation of sentences does not seem to pre-eminently look at the receiver’s knowledge state – given that packaging features and the degree of discourse availability of contents do not always match in political messages – but rather look at the receiver’s potential reaction to the

truth of the information conveyed.⁵ By “reaction”, I here mean any assumption or belief of credibility, evaluation of trustfulness as well as of the speaker’s honesty and addressability when dubious contents are conveyed. In this sense, the way receivers handle these aspects of an interaction will determine the degree to which a speaker’s reputation can be smeared or damaged. Therefore, the speaker may take an advantage of reducing the likelihood of being challenged for what she says, yet, at the same time, successfully pursuing her manipulative intent. The evidential strategies contended for information structure are what makes it an effective device to get messages across and convince the readers of their truth, as well as of the speaker’s reliability.

It stands to reason that, extending the proposed research to a much wider corpus of political speeches would add further strength to the considerations made so far. However, a more systematic balancing of parameters such as topic, context, political group, year, etc. is no doubt a desirable advancement and appraisal of the present research, as well as a more fine-grained method of descriptive statistics to account for the results observed. This would also reveal more straightforward and sharply defined patterns of interactions between the use of presupposition and assertion and the type of content they encode in an utterance. The aim of this study was thus to open a first gambit on the interplay between information structure and evidentiality in political discourse as well as in other kinds of manipulative text in communication. As a matter of fact, what I will propose in the following chapter is an inquiry on the use of presupposition in news discourse and how the association between this strategy and different content types may end up being manipulative in the comprehension of newspaper articles on the part of an average citizen.

5. As rightfully noticed by Sbisà (2007: 14), public communicators often do not care about whether certain contents will be easily reconstructed by the receiver. What rather seems to matter to them is that the text/discourse is “usable” as it is.

Manipulation in news discourse

The function of presuppositions in the language of journalism

*The media's the most powerful entity on earth.
They have the power to make the innocent guilty
and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power.
Because they control the minds of the masses.*

– Malcom X

4.1 Introduction

A generally accepted view in studies on news language is that “there are contradictory perceptions about what the news media actually does, what it means to do, and what it achieves” (Cotter 2010: 17). These perceptions are fostered, among other things, by the interplay of two opposing perspectives: the assumption that news language uncontroversially cleaves to “rules of objectivity”, on the one hand, and, on the other, the conception of news as stretches of discourse which, similarly to other types of discourse, are steeped in ideologies, strategies of knowledge conveyance, attitudes, social, cultural and situational meanings, which are largely dependent on the journalist’s use (and, sometimes, *abuse*) of language. Because of their deep reliance on communication, ideologies are “linguistically mediated” (Bekalu 2006: 149), which is why the best way of unraveling the thought of institutions or political leaders is by studying their discourse and, even more thoroughly, the language of the news messages regarding them. In fact, far from inhering in the sole remit of propagandistic texts (e.g. political speeches, commercial adverts, etc.), manipulative ideologies also percolate through news media, often in ways which largely elude the conscious responsiveness of the audience. This explains why much today’s contention within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework is likely to deal with newspaper texts in the same way as if they were transcripts of political speeches (Van Dijk 2006; Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2020). As argued before, the manipulative “snares” hidden in news language draw their effectiveness from patterns and expressions found in everyday language use, which makes subtle manipulative tactics even less straightforward to detect. And we have learned that, by and large, the seeds and effects of this communicative practice could only be

spotted and critically examined (and, when necessary, even rejected) only through a solid metalinguistic awareness of the discursive means it capitalizes on. A conception of news language as constituting a particular type of discourse and as a social practice has in time urged scholars within the purviews of sociology and ethnography of communication (Fowler 1991; Fairclough 2003; Jones & Collins 2006), as well as linguists and philosophers of language (Sbisà 1999; Van Dijk 2006), to acknowledge the role of linguistic theory as an “aid to studying the ideological character of newspaper discourse” (Bekalu 2006: 156). In Chapter 2, I have discussed some earlier and recent findings on the effects that discourse strategies such as presupposition have on the mental representation of textual contents and I have argued that although neurological data seem to go in a different direction than behavioral ones, the apparent greater cost hinted at by specific neurophysiological signatures while processing presupposed information could well be accounted for as indicating the cognitive effort required to integrate some new presupposition in the mental model of discourse. To a certain extent, this does not necessarily mean that the truth of the presupposed content is deeply inspected, for precisely the reason that it *must* be taken for granted. It can thus be assumed that the amount of attention devoted to presupposition is simply “enough” to take its content for granted, even if its newness status requires that a greater pool of cognitive resources is devoted to introducing it in the set of shared assumptions (*linking operation*, Masia et al. 2017). In this chapter, I suggest to recast this behavior of presupposition and its manipulative influence on the construal of news messages in the Italian press building on “good enough” approaches to sentence processing (Ferreira et al. 2002; Ferreira & Lowder 2016). These psycholinguistic models emphasize people’s tendency to produce biased and inaccurate representations of a sentence’s meaning due to superficial and inaccurate analyses of its structure. They correlate these aspects to underspecified parsing of a sentence’s structure or to the encoding of more or less expected informational hierarchies. Also, this chapter will seek to unravel what contents appear to be more frequently associated to presupposition in Italian news language. Calling for a good-enough processing modality, presuppositions become manipulative discourse devices because they reduce readers’ cognitive control on their truth and, in so doing, they have the power to “build” *psychologically controlled news*, which are stealthily inoculated in the cognitive environment of recipients in a way that is weakly controllable by recipients themselves, but highly controllable by the writer. A far-reaching consequence of this function of presupposition (*ab*)use in news language involves the formation and long-lasting consolidation of ideologies in people’s behaviors and lives.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 4.1 tackles the relation between news language and manipulative processes. Section 4.2 addresses the textual functions of presupposition and its manipulative effects in comprehension. In

Section 4.3, the role of presupposition in language comprehension is recast in the light of “good enough” models of language processing zooming in on the way such models induce biased representations of information in the recipient’s mind. Finally, in Section 4.4, examples of presupposition use from Italian news discourse are presented, added to a quantitative analysis of the trends observed in the gathered corpus.

4.2 News language and manipulation

News discourse has been the object of scientific inquiry since 1970s. However, the seminal approaches of this thread of research had largely ignored the way recipients understood, memorized and integrated information and knowledge from news (Van Dijk 2009). Subsequent lines of investigation in the field of text linguistics – chiefly headed by Van Dijk’s works (Van Dijk 1988a, 1988b) – shifted their object of inquiry to the cognitive aspects of text reception as well as to the ideological dimension(s) traced by particular strategies of language use. Indeed, new perspectives spread that conceived ideologies not just as mind-external, historically- and culturally-grounded constructs to be understood and assessed through a sociological or an anthropological lens, but also as outcomes of peculiar and identifiable communicative practices. It is in fact becoming increasingly compelling to nail down the perils of emerging ideologies not in the precepts they uphold, but rather in *the way such precepts weave into the mental world of their target receivers*.¹ Besides the means or channels of communication ideologies travel with, we have seen that also the particular linguistic expressions they receive in a message is a decisive factor of their manipulative success. As a matter of fact, since “the formulation of an idea is the first and decisive step towards it being put into discussion” (Ducrot 1972: 6), any manipulative communicative act is generally likely to convey ideas or evaluations as less obtrusively as possible (Hunston & Thompson 2001: 9), which makes it easier to even block truth, likeliness, and acceptability checking (Saussure 2005: 126). On the psychological level, these and other aspects converge upon the general attempt of the manipulator to draw the recipient’s attention to information A rather than B, thus causing him/her to generate a partial and biased understanding of a message (Saussure 2005).

As already argued at the beginning of this book, a crucial factor at the basis of the “covert” nature of manipulative conversational moves is that they substantially rely on general properties of discourse processing, these latter in

1. This aspect is in fact what makes many kinds of public communication *coercive*, because aimed at “maximizing the number of ‘shared visions’” in the target audience (Cap 2016).

turn dependent on the use of ordinary linguistic patterns. This means that natural languages have developed no *ad hoc* linguistic tools to achieve deception, but structures already existing for other purposes may contribute to the attainment of different manipulative goals in certain communicative contexts (Bednarek 2006).

A good way to discourage the receiver from detecting a manipulative intent is by making this detection a costly course to take.

The more costly it is for the hearer to retrieve correctly the information communicated, and to evaluate the truth, the likeliness or the ethical acceptability of it, the less likely the hearer is to resist manipulation. (Saussure 2005: 139)

As already pointed out in the first chapter, manipulation is a form of mind control and, as such, it instils an axiomatic set of beliefs in the reasoning material of the manipulated (Saussure 2005: 123) thus eventually activating preferred mental models in her mind and inducing her to act and behave according to the interests of the manipulator. In the case of news language, manipulative discourse can act as an eulogistic “amplifier” of a political thought or as a stealthy “vilifier” of other ideas. The problem with this state of things is that while there is a higher probability that people might be somewhat prejudiced against what politicians say in their speeches and then strive to find the manipulative traps hidden in their messages, the expectation that also newspapers might be sources of “ideological forging” is held less strongly and less extensively among common people. In fact, as observed by Cotter (2010: 2), news language reflects a direct connection between journalists and the public, which is further strengthened by the assumption of commitment and responsibility that journalists are expected to have in writing about world facts. And, since their primary goal is to inform the reader on relevant political, economical and social issues, suspects of deceptive communicative moves are on the whole less profoundly rooted. Yet, recent contention in a CDA perspective is gleaned always more cogent evidence that a more conscious and wiser attitude to the rhetoric of newspapers and its ideological pitfalls is strongly advisable. One way to achieve the desired state of awareness is by understanding how language can be used to manipulate others. In the subsequent section, I will narrow down this analysis to the phenomenon of presupposition and its manipulative power in news discourse. Quoting Sbisà (1999), we have seen that one crucial aspect of the manipulative power of presupposition lies in the fact that it gets interpreted as content that *ought to be shared* in an interaction. We have also seen that this happens because the hearer wants to “avoid treating the speaker as someone violating norms of discourse” (Sbisà 1999: 12)”, which may in turn be deemed a kind of uncooperative attitude and a hindrance to the normal unfolding of the cooperational relationship. On the writer/speaker side, since the overt assertion of a proposition commits the speaker to giving evidence or reasons for it, presupposition packaging

as well as the receiver's blind acceptance of its truth would save the unnecessary effort of endorsing it with the obligation to provide further argumentation (Sbisà 1999: 13). On a general basis, if a text has to be (fully) relevant to the attainment of the author's communicative goal, the presupposition of contents which, despite being new, are less relevant to the understanding of an utterance responds to economy criteria and, in this way, they leave more of the cognitive storage available to be directed to assertive informative units. Yet, often enough, also contents that would deserve being attended to more thoroughly – either because they have to do with values, social norms, ideas or perspectives on facts – take the form of background information in newspaper articles. This strategy wields a huge influence on the mental representation of an utterance's meaning because not only are evaluating or ideological presuppositions taken as weakly informative in a message, but they are also processed in a “good enough” way, which decreases the likelihood that their potential falsity or the (un)reliability of the source are properly gauged. Before delving into these models in more detail, a few lines on the mechanics of text comprehension and its relation to “good enough” approaches to language processing will come in useful.

4.3 Text comprehension within “good enough” perspectives on language processing

Theories in text comprehension are now legion. To mention just a few, Maclellan (1997) highlights the importance of monitoring textual knowledge with the view to constructing a situation model. Grabe's (2009) view of comprehension involves both remembering information from the text and recalling it for subsequent use. Building on the relevant aspects of these and other accounts, Derrick (2017: 55) puts forth a definition of reading-to-understand as a particular type of reading which enables (a) a later recall of information in time, (b) an understanding (whether conscious or sub-conscious) of discourse structure, (c) the construction of a mental representation of a text, (d) the formulation of explanatory and predictive inferences, and (e) the cognitive and meta-cognitive monitoring of the text that aid retention and later recall of information. Sbisà (2007), on the contrary, delineates a *behavioral* account of text comprehension identifying it with the stage at which the recipient finds herself when she can produce an “adequate response” to the text. Put another way, when a reading task produces a satisfactory response, the reader can be thought to have understood the text. This view of comprehension shifts the focus from the cognitive and representational workings of the reader to the *use* she makes of the text in different contexts. It stands to reason that, based on the use and purposes a text is addressed to, both reading strategies and criteria of

information selection will change accordingly. However, for most text types aimed at informing people about world facts or persuade them to act in a certain way, the response the text produces in the reader is often the most compelling concern. This is by and large what happens with propagandistic texts which, far from merely enhancing the recipient's knowledge on, say, a politician's thought on some issues, they also intend to get the recipient look on those issues in the same way. By the same token, a commercial is obviously not only conceived to let the audience know about the existence of a product, and of its positive qualities, but also to induce them to buy it. As rightfully noticed by Sbisà (2007: 11), for certain types of texts, what essentially matters to the sender is that the text is simply *consumed* for its immediate purpose. Sbisà remarks that this idea of comprehension entails some non-negligible premises, associated to a number of potentially harmful consequences. To begin with, the fact that the receiver has indeed understood the text ceases to be a pressing concern, given that, whatever the amount of content material understood by the reader, what counts is that she can simply *use* the text in some way. Secondly, it is not so important that the reader forms the same mental representations of the text as those elaborated by the receiver in producing it (Ibid.: 11). Thirdly, there would be no point in wondering whether the reader's mental representations of the text are correct, compared to what the texts actually convey and whether they reflect the real intentions of the writer. Consequently, the fact that the reader might successfully reconstruct, not only the main content of the text, but also the original intentions underlying its production and transmission ends up being the least of a communicator's problems.

L'effettiva ricostruibilità di un senso da parte dei fruitori è l'ultimo pensiero di molti comunicatori e, a questo punto, forse, dei fruitori stessi. Se qualunque testo, purché apparentemente coeso, purché attraente, può ricevere nella fruizione qualunque senso, basta che sia usato, consumato, non occorre certo darsi pena né che sia comprensibile né che contenga effettivamente qualche cosa da comprendere.

(Sbisà 2007: 14)²

One may legitimately ask: how does this come about? How can readers fail to generate accurate and exhaustive representations of texts? A plausible answer to this question can be found in the role played by what the recent psycholinguistic literature has referred to as "good enough" mechanisms of language processing. These models emphasize the tendency of the comprehension system to perform

2. "The actual reconstructability of a text on the part of text users is the last thought of many communicators and, at this stage, maybe, also of text users themselves. If any text, provided it is apparently cohesive and appealing, can be used in some way, there is no need to worry that much about its comprehensibility, nor that it might contain something to be understood."

superficial analyses of the linguistic input, which sometimes results in inaccurate interpretations (Ferreira & Lowder 2016: 218). In previous investigations, misrepresentations of utterance meanings were studied observing people's parsing of garden path sentences (Christianson et al. 2001), like that in (1)

- (1) While Anna dressed the baby played in the crib

Presenting their subjects with the sentence in (1), Christianson et al. (2001) noticed that, while all of them more confidently reported the representation that the baby played in the crib, many of them were less sure that Anna actually dressed the baby. This uncertainty depended on the ambiguous syntactic function of *the baby*, which imposed a revision of the prior analysis, once the second predicate of the sentence was come across. Ferreira et al. (2002) argued that in dealing with ambiguous syntactic analyses, people are generally likely to compute only one analysis on the basis of *its relevance to the prior discourse context and the plausibility with the general purposes of conversation*. In language processing, this mechanics becomes particularly conspicuous especially when time and cognitive resources are limited. In these cases, people are generally bound not to consider all information available to select a suitable interpretation. Rather, their searching process halts when they reach a first satisfying interpretation. This interpretation will be considered *good enough* for the interactive process to further on, no matter it is indeed accurate or not; what counts, instead, is that it can serve the purpose of gleaning a satisfactory understanding of the overall message. So, the first satisfactory analysis of a sentence is the one the receiver settles for. Capitalizing on this characterization of processing modalities, Ferreira & Lowder (2016) have recently proposed to extend good enough frameworks to the decoding of different informational patternings of utterances (Halliday 1985; Lambrecht 1994; Chafe 1994). We have seen before that evidence from verification tests and reading time experiments (Langford & Holmes 1979; Bredart & Modolo 1988) showed that detection rates of false information were usually higher in correspondence with focal or assertive sentence units, and lower when the false content was topicalized or presupposed. These trends were reported to correlate with a *shallower* processing induced by topical or presuppositional packaging, compared to a deeper processing cued by assertion or focus. Ferreira & Lowder (2016) put forth an explanation of the different trends in error detection rates as contingent on a good enough modality directed to presuppositions and topics, compared to a more thorough processing devoted to assertion and focus. The authors maintain that since the human attentional system is oriented to the processing of new information, recourse to good enough modalities for the encoding of topical or presupposed information ensures that a sufficient amount of processing resources be available for an accurate representation of information

encoded as focus or as assertion. Put otherwise, since our prior concern is to evaluate the new and purposeful content in a message, we cannot spend too much time nor too many energies construing all the details of other less informative content(s). As a consequence, in cases in which topic or presupposition packaging is chosen to convey contents in need of a deeper critical evaluation their actual veracity or reliability would never be exhaustively sounded because of the shallow and superficial processing they instruct to.

The types of contents that can be taken for granted, and, therefore, processed in a good enough way in news discourse, are various and differently impact the reader's mental representation of the content of a newspaper article as a whole. In the following sections, I will present data gleaned from a research on the use of presupposition in the Italian press and, particularly, on its more or less recurrent association to different types of information. These correlations throughout the data set will also be discussed as an overview of the preferred argumentative styles of the most popular and influencing newspapers in Italy.

4.4 Data analysis: Functions of presuppositions in Italian news language

4.4.1 The corpus

For the Italian press, earlier contention of presupposition use in news discourse is found in Sbisà (1999, 2007). Sbisà was particularly interested in the use and distribution of *new* presuppositions in newspaper articles and in how they can become persuasive devices in forging mental models in the reader's mind thus limiting *his freedom of critical assessment of their content*. In her characterization, though, she considers new presuppositions as a cumulative category, i.e. without distinguishing between types of information being encoded. She therefore regards any new presupposition (whatever its content) as *persuasive* owing to its function of (re)shaping common ground exploiting the unconscious state of the reader. Capitalizing on the outcome of this inquiry, the present study intends to further investigate the role of presupposition in news language considering the different communicative intentions they may encode or, better said, *underencode* in the news. Following a data-driven criterion, that is, an approach based not on some preliminary theoretical scaffolding but on what emerged as more or less representative in the collected data, the four most recurrent types of information to appear as more widely diffuse across different newspapers are laid out below. As can be noticed, some of these content types also characterize political discourse (see Chapter 3, Section 6.6), which is suggestive of a clear-cut, yet not entirely unexpected affinity between political speeches and newspaper texts.

- **BLASTING/ATTACK**: criticism of negative aspects of an issue, someone's behavior or opinions. (Lee & Xu 2018)
- **EVALUATION**: expression of one's opinion or perspective on a particular issue. (Bednarek 2006)
- **NEUTRAL**: objective information on world facts or agenda announcements. (Graham et al. 2013)
- **IRONICAL**: content hiding other subtle communicative intentions. In most cases, it expresses a veiled critic towards a situation or character. (Booth 1974)

Of course the proposed taxonomy does not exhaust the whole range of content types that can be found in news discourse, yet it singles out those most frequently receiving presupposition packaging in a fairly wide corpus of Italian news.

For the corpus, I have selected seven of the most popular newspapers in Italy (*L'Espresso*, *La Stampa*, *Il Messaggero*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Giornale*) chosen among the most sold and read by Italian citizens, both online and on paper. For each newspaper, I have singled out articles on political, financial and social issues which have been the plank of media discussions between February and August 2019. Precise figures on the number of editions and corpus extension (n. words) for each newspaper are reported in Section 4.5 (Table 5). In Section 4.4, I will discuss examples of presuppositions used to convey neutral, evaluative, blasting and ironical contents. In Section 4.5 the overall distribution trends of association patterns between presupposition packaging and the four content types in the seven newspapers considered are discussed.

4.5 Types of presupposed content

4.5.1 Presupposition and neutral information

We have seen before in this volume that a pivotal role of presuppositions is increase the informative load of utterances, since it allows compacting more new contents within a single clause unit (Masia 2017a). This is made possible either by the capability of language of taking for granted contents that are not actually shared and by humans' ability to *accommodate* unshared contents and adjust their common ground accordingly.

The use of informative presuppositions is so diffuse in news texts that it can be regarded as inherent in their rhetorical and argumentative structure, and by and large contributes to their semiotic and communicative effectiveness. The occurrences in (2)–(5) have been excerpted from the opening lines of four articles taken from *La Repubblica*, *Il Messaggero* and *Il Giornale*. It can be surmised that,

appearing at the very beginning of the texts, the presuppositions they contain (bold-typed in the examples) are new to the reader.

- (2) Ai leghisti [...] non è parso vero di leggere sul sito dell' Espresso e di Repubblica **gli audio che mettono nei guai Virginia Raggi**. (La Repubblica, 18.04.2019)
[‘For the members of the League party [...] there was no real thought to read on the Espresso and La Repubblica websites about the audio recordings that get Virginia Raggi into trouble.’]
- (3) Matteo Salvini sfida **ancora una volta la Ue**. (La Repubblica, 17.06.2019)
[‘Matteo Salvini challenges EU once more.’]
- (4) ...la terra è ormai ad un passo per i 42 migranti della Sea Watch 3.
Ma non possono ancora toccarla. (Il Messaggero, 26.06.2019)
[...land is approaching for the 42 immigrants of the Sea Watch 3. But they can't still touch it']
- (5) La rotta balcanica è **tornata in voga**, inutile nascondarlo
[‘There is no point in denying that the Balkan route is back on the map.’]
(Il Giornale, 30.06.2019)

In (2), the defining relative clause *gli audio che mettono nei guai Virginia Raggi* (“the audio recordings that get Virginia Raggi into trouble”) requires the reader to comply with the truth that there exist audio recordings that got Virginia Raggi, Mayor of the city of Rome, into trouble. In (3), the iterative adverb *ancora* in the phrase *ancora una volta* (“one more time”) imposes the reader to abruptly construe the idea that Matteo Salvini, leader of the League party, has challenged the European Union before. An analogous presupposition is the one derivable in (4) where the same adverbial expression entails the assumption that the prohibition of landings for immigrants was operating also before. Finally, in (6) the change of state verb *tornare* (literally “come back”) activates the presupposition that the Balkan route used to be a popular route for migrants seeking to go past the Italian borders.

Here, rather than expressing blasting remarks or ideological positions, the function presupposition triggers serve in these text portions is rather to induce the reader to take for granted factual information and objective states of affairs with a fairly neutral manipulative intent. Presuppositions of neutral content are thus “innocuous” presuppositions and do not necessarily conceal a deceptive purpose. Their use may in fact well be dictated by the need to streamline the argumentative architecture of the text or because the writer takes on an all-embracing attitude towards her readers: those already in possession of the presupposed information will not be treated as ignorant, thus being bored by the overt assertion of information they already know, and those not sharing the presupposition yet will have an opportunity to enhance their knowledge with content they were unaware of (Sbisà 2007: 90). But, if playing with readers’ knowledge states can be seen as an overall

harmless communicative move, when this practice is resorted to to transmit value judgments, critics or ideological stances, its use ends up being an *abuse* and a dishonest exploitation of readers' processing capacities. Thus, when delicate matters or critical information become the object of transaction, writers should be more inclined to opt for *overt* and assertive discourse strategies, not reducing the reader's cognitive control as well as her ability to assess the veracity of the contents she accesses in a news text.

4.5.2 Evaluative presuppositions

Another common use of presuppositions in news language is in association with evaluative meanings. Bednarek (2006) frames evaluation as a powerful conceptual device, because (a) it provides a reasoning scaffolding to interpret the world, (b) it leads to the formation of long-term values, and (c) it constructs an interactive relation with the reader. In newspapers, evaluation takes the form of opinions, attitudes and viewpoints about entities or propositions. Within discourse analysis, evaluation is portrayed as a very complex textual phenomenon (Bednarek 2006: 8) and its interpretation is strongly context-dependent. In some cases, its expression also intersects with the encoding of evidential meanings in that it places a proposition within the writer's own domain of observation. As Hunston & Thompson point out (1999: 9), "evaluation can be used to manipulate the reader, in that it can persuade him or her to see things in a particular way".³ This, observes Hoey (1999), becomes even more true when evaluation is not the main point of the clause, which makes it more difficult to challenge.

The presuppositions (bold-typed in the examples) associated with the two definite descriptions in (7) and (8), and with the adverbial triggers in (6) and (9) express a more subjective participation of the writer in the text portion to which the presuppositional phrase belongs.

- (6) Parole rafforzate dalla ricostruzione dei fatti (**anch'essa da prendere con le pinze**) del segretario di Stato Mike Pompeo.
 [‘These words are strengthened by the fact-finding outcome (**to be taken with a grain of salt, as well**) of the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.]
 (Il Corriere della Sera, 01.05.2019)
- (7) **Nell'imbarazzo e nell'immobilismo del Partito democratico**, chi continua a rompere il silenzio è Franco Roberti. (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 15.06.2019)
 [‘**In the face of embarrassment and inaction of the Democratic Party**, who continues to break the silence is Franco Roberti.]

3. (Ibid.: 9): "It takes a conscious effort of detachment for the reader not to identify with the writer's point of view, or the ideology that underlies it".

- (8) **Lo tsunami che sta investendo la magistratura** scoperchia ogni giorno un nuovo scandalo.
 [“**The tsunami that is overwhelming the judiciary** unearthes a new scandal every day”] (L’Espresso, 18.06.2019)
- (9) ...ascensore sociale inesistente, netto ritardo rispetto agli altri Paesi europei **persino nelle competenze digitali**. È questa la scuola italiana.
 [‘...an inexistent social elevator and low skills compared to other European countries **even in digital competences**’] (L’Espresso, 31.05.2019)

In (6), *anche* (“also”) induces the presupposition that, besides the fact-finding outcome, some other aspects involved in the failed coup to bring down Maduro’s government should be taken with a “grain of salt” (*con le pinze*). In (7), by means of the two coordinated definite descriptions, *Nell’imbarazzo e nell’immobilismo del Partito Democratico* (“In the face of embarrassment and inaction of the Democratic Party”), the writer presupposes that the Democratic Party is in the throes of embarrassment and inaction, a remark which one would expect to read or hear from a political rival of the party. The other definite description in (8) conveys as taken for granted that the Italian judiciary is in the middle of a real “tsunami”. Finally, in (9), the adverb *persino* (“even”), due to its additive value, presupposes that the Italian young have low skills also in other domains, besides digital technology. Moreover, the emphatic and mirative meaning associated to the adverb expresses the writer’s unexpectedness of the fact stated.⁴

In line with views put forth in former contention (Garassino et al. 2019), evaluative contents, similarly to attacking and self-praising ones (these latter more common in political discourse) are deemed as on the whole more likely to raise critical reaction, since they impose views and opinions which may become less straightforwardly challengeable if presupposed (Fox 2001).⁵ The same cannot be said for neutral presuppositions which, as we have seen, convey information of a more weakly tendentious nature.

4. A more neutral option of (9) would have been: ...*ascensore sociale inesistente, netto ritardo rispetto agli altri Paesi europei soprattutto nelle competenze digitali* (“especially in digital competences). È questa la scuola italiana. Despite shrinking the reference to a specific entity, *soprattutto* does not convey the idea that a given state of affairs is deemed almost to the limit of the possible, which entails a subtle subjective remark of the speaker, and more strongly characterizes the meaning of *persino*.

5. This is contingent on the fact that with backgrounded or taken for granted evaluations, the reader is not positioned to make a decision as to whether or not to agree with the evaluation; rather, the reader’s acceptance is simply assumed (Hunston & Thompson 1999).

4.5.3 Presupposition and blasting

A less widely investigated phenomenon in news language is the expression of blast or criticism. One would generally expect to come across blasting or critical messages in texts with a stronger propagandistic purpose – especially in political contexts in which ideological polarizations are strong. Instead, also newspapers sometimes indulge in dispensing critical or subtly insulting remarks, not uncommonly by means of presupposition. Prime examples of this use of presuppositions are given in (10)–(13).

- (10) Lotti che **millanta anche di avere parlato con il presidente Mattarella** – che smentisce ogni circostanza – della possibile nomina del procuratore **Francesco Lo Voi**.
 [‘Lotti who also claims to have spoken with President Mattarella – who denies all circumstances – about the possible appointment of prosecutor Francesco Lo Voi.’] (Il Messaggero, 15.06.2019)
- (11) Il procuratore di Milano [...] non usa giri di parole per condannare senza appello il **torbido intreccio capitolino tra magistrati, politica e maneggioni** che ha travolto il Csm.
 [‘The attorney from Milan [...] speaks frankly to completely condemn the **dishonest interweaving in Rome between judges, politics and wheeler-dealers** that involved the Superior Council of Magistracy.’] (Il Giornale, 19.06.2019)
- (12) I migranti conoscono **le carenze delle politiche migratorie** Ue e le sfruttano.
 [‘Judges know **the shortcomings of the migration policies of the EU** and exploit them’] (Il Giornale, 30.06.2019)
- (13) Per carità, ognuno apre bottega quando vuole. Ma **resta l’assurdità del sistema**.
 [‘By all means, each one opens the time he wishes. But **the whole system remains absurd**.’] (Il Giornale, 30.06.2019)

The focus-sensitive adverb *anche* (“also”) in (10), which bears a logico-semantic meaning of addition, activates the presupposition that Lotti, a member of the Italian Deputies Chamber, has pretended to do something else besides speaking to the President of the Italian Republic. The verb *millantare* (“pretend”) has a negative connotation in Italian and, combined with the adverbial presupposition trigger, the writer extends this pretending attitude of the PM to something else he has done. Even stronger remarks are those encoded as definite descriptions in (11) and (12). In (11), it is presupposed that there existed a *torbido* (“dishonest”) plot between judges, politicians and wheeler-dealers, while in (12) it is taken for granted that the European immigration policies are deficient. Finally, in (13), the change of state verb *restare* (“remain”) triggers the presupposition that the system of international

agreements between Italy and Slovenia for the management of migration flows was absurd before as well.

Sbisà (1999: 7) regards this use of presupposition as highly persuasive since it allows “conveying accusations and criticism without spelling them out explicitly”. As a matter of fact, since an attack or a blasting remark is generally aimed at smearing somebody’s reputation, the use of an assertive strategy would commit the speaker “to giving evidence or reasons for what he has asserted or argued for” (Sbisà 1999: 7). Since discussing a disapproving assumption would expose the writer’s reliability and trustfulness to the reader’s critical analysis, conveying it as presupposed would allow the writer to circumvent the rules and get the message straight to the reader’s mental model.

4.5.4 Presupposition and irony

Not infrequently, the rhetoric of news discourse avails itself of ironical content. Theories on irony today are legion. Grice (1978) originally described irony as a form of *pretense*, in that “to be ironical is, among other things, to pretend [...], and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would spoil the effect” (Grice 1978: 125). Another common theory is known as the Mention theory of irony and hinges on a distinction between the use and mention of an expression (Jorgensen et al. 1984). More particularly, in saying *There is a cat in this room* and *There is a cat on this page*, the difference between the two propositions is that while the former is used to refer to a real and concrete animal, in the latter the word *cat* is mentioned with a three-letter word. So, in saying ironically *What a lovely weather we will have tomorrow!* to actually mean that it is going to be rainy, the speaker is mentioning some weather forecaster’s words or sentiments in order to express contempt toward them.

Within the philosophical and linguistics literature (Wilson 2006; Popa-Wyatt 2019), irony is described as a trope causing a semantic shift from a literal meaning to its opposite. In Hutcheon’s words (Hutcheon 1995), irony operates between the level of “the said” and the level of “the unsaid”, which makes it akin to other common implicatural phenomena. The functioning of an ironical speech act like *What a lovely wheather we are having!* uttered on a rainy day in fact hinges on the flouting of the Maxims of Relation and Quantity, in that the speaker is not providing exhaustive information on the actual wheather conditions, nor is her utterance directly relevant to the purpose of the conversational exchange. The receiver has to assume these two maxims to be observed by the speaker in order for the ironical utterance to be cooperative.

In most of its uses, irony involves an evaluative judgment, which is often, though not always, negative.⁶ The interpretation of this judgment is however entrusted to the receiver's responsibility (Vleugel 2014), in that she has to "take position" not only between opposite meanings (the said vs. the unsaid) but also between moral alternatives (what is good vs. what is wrong). Because of this crucial property, irony increases the reader's active participation in a text and her recourse to subjective values and parameters to make choices between interpretations (Vleugel 2014). This transfer of responsibility inevitably comes with some risk of misunderstanding, which the writer generally seeks to avoid. Since ironical utterances may lead readers to indulge in more elaborate reasoning – with a view to better assess the truth of the real intentional meaning of the writer – this conundrum would be easily bypassed if any ironical content is presented as presupposed. In such a case, the reader, urged to construe a satisfying mental representation of the sentence to further on in the communication process, reduces her attentive control on the ironical content presupposed, which silently gets, in its double-faceted value, in her mental model of discourse. Throughout the corpus, presuppositions used to convey ironical values were on the whole less frequent than evaluative presuppositions. Below, I report some of the most representative occurrences of the category.

- (14) Due società in cui **il guru del leader leghista** ha avuto ruoli di spicco hanno trasferito la sede legale in un paradiso fiscale.
 ['Two companies in which the guru of the leader of the League party has had prominent roles have moved their registered office in a tax heaven'.]
 (L'Espresso, 19.04.2019)
- (15) Forse per evitare l'**incomodo di parlarsi**, Luigi Di Maio arriva in macchina (in ritardo), Matteo Salvini con un altro volo. Non si diranno una parola neppure più tardi.
 ['Maybe, in order to avoid the inconvenience to talk to each other, Luigi Di Maio arrives by car (later) and Matteo Salvini by plane. They will not talk to each other later either.].
 (Il Corriere della sera, 18.04.2019)
- (16) **Dalla facoltà di essere fisicamente in più luoghi si passa ai poteri di preveggenza.**
 ['From the capability of being everywhere at once to the power to see the future'.]
 (L'Espresso, 31.05.2019)

6. Indeed, there are cases in which a man may ironically refer to a woman's beauty by saying "she's really ugly" or "I have never seen an uglier person in my life", while instead meaning that she is particularly beautiful and attractive. In such a case, irony would be exploited to show an appreciation.

The Excerpt in (14) has been taken from an article about a scandal involving the former undersecretary to the Italian Transport Ministry who has been declared guilty of fraudulent bankruptcy and had allegedly been bribed to illegitimately introduce an amendment in the government budget plan. In the article, he is referred to as *the guru* of the leader of the League party, with the ironical intention to mock at the regrettable fact that he had been entrusted by the former Vice-minister (leader of the League) to carry out relevant financial tasks throughout the duration of the parliamentary term. Here, the ironical use of the term “guru” is made less salient by its being part of a presuppositional construction, which reduces the likelihood that the reader might spend more time disentangling the non-literal, intentional meaning of the author.

The other definite description in (15), *l'incomodo di parlarsi* (“the inconvenience to talk to each other”), presupposes that the two former Italian Vice-ministers, Luigi Di Maio (Five Stars Movement) and Matteo Salvini (The League), feel uncomfortable talking to each other. The expression ironically refers to the fact that since the beginning of the parliamentary term, the two political exponents had often had divergent views and repeatedly quarreled on several important issues. The effect of the insulting remark would have been strikingly different if addressed in the form of an overt assertion (e.g. *Parlarsi, per i due vice-ministri, sarebbe un incomodo* (“Talking to each other, for the two Vice-ministers, would be inconvenient”), since the alleged inconvenience would have been conveyed as the content at issue of the utterance.

The sneering effect of some ironical presuppositions is even more remarkable in (16), taken from an article reporting on a huge scandal which involved a public competition for school officials. The first definite phrase, *dalla facoltà di essere fisicamente in più luoghi*, (“From the capability of being everywhere at once”) hints at the strange case of evaluators who were expected to be found in the competition venue during the evaluation procedure, when in fact they appeared to be somewhere else. The second definite phrase, *ai poteri di preveggenza* (“the power to see the future”) refers to the fact that leaks on the results of the competition had been secretly diffused in advance on some social networks. In both cases, the ironical strategy allows mitigating the impact of what would have been a strong contempt on the part of the writer (Booth 1974; Winner 1988), yet the overall effect is made less direct and elusive by the presuppositional packaging in which they are encoded.

Kapogianni (2016: 25) observes that an important pre-condition of irony interpretation is recognizing the speaker’s dissociative attitude” towards the unsaid proposition. Yet, since this step would lead the addressee to nail down the writer’s real intentional meaning, presupposition packaging would make this process less probable as, by reducing attentional awareness, it drives the reader to form an incomplete representation of its ironical value thus leaving her with the impossibility of choosing between more ambivalent interpretations. Put another way, if the reader is presented with the requirement to take some information for granted, she will

make haste to comply with such requirement and will not probably bother about what the writer's actual communicative intention is, being this latter more straightforwardly detected when associated to the assertive component of an utterance.⁷ So, as a rule of thumb, it can be assumed that *the more assertive some ironical content is, the easier it will be for the reader to reconstruct the unsaid intentional meaning of the writer. The more presuppositional its expression, the greater the difficulty to pin down what hidden communicative intention the ironical value hints at.*

4.6 Distribution of presuppositions and content types in the Italian press

In this section, trends on the frequency of occurrence of neutral, evaluative, blasting and ironical presuppositions in the seven newspapers considered is discussed. Building on the foregoing considerations on the textual functions of presupposition, the frequency of *new* presuppositions in each newspaper's sub-corpus is indicative of the amount of linguistic and content material which the journalist presents as to be processed in a "good enough", shallow modality. We have seen that while such a processing behavior of presupposition should not be considered threatening for interpretive processes in the case of neutral presuppositions – being their function the mere transmission of objective contents – its impact on contents associated with more subjective evaluations, views, negative or positive remarks, or even innuendos triggered by ironical attitudes of the journalist, may eventuate in more far-reaching manipulative effects. This is because in being packaged as presuppositions, these types of information do not receive attentive processing, and so their reliability or trustfulness remains partially or completely underdetermined.

The distribution of the four types of presuppositional content has been assessed on a more or less balanced dataset of sub-corpora with comparable lengths. More detailed figures on the number of words for each sub-corpus is given in Table 5.

Table 5. Corpus of Italian newspapers selected for the analysis

Newspaper	n. editions	n. words per (sub-corpus)
<i>Il Fatto Quotidiano</i> (FQ)	39.396	10725
<i>La Repubblica</i> (REP)	301.565	10119
<i>Il Messaggero</i> (MESS)	90.012	10063
<i>L'Espresso</i> (ESPR)	195.787	10521
<i>Il Giornale</i> (GIORN)	79.125	10145
<i>Il Corriere della Sera</i> (CORR)	296.005	10554
<i>La Stampa</i> (STAM)	256.203	10155

7. Of course these considerations can well be thought to obtain for political communication as well.

Following text-driven methodologies (Bednarek 2006), data have been manually annotated for both the packaging parameter (presuppositional encoding) and the type of content conveyed. As contended in previous works (Bednarek 2006), this method proves to be more suitable with “small-scale text corpora” as compared to automated large-scale corpus analyses. Owing to the relevance of unshared presuppositions to the attainment of manipulative communicative purposes, I have mainly considered new presuppositions for the analysis. It must be highlighted, though, that the newness degree of an information item cannot be established on absolute bases, given that the reader might have come across the information somewhere else in the newspaper. However, since controlling for this variable would have involved a demanding monitoring of all content material written in a print, it was deemed appropriate to take the sole co-text in each article as relevant context for the considered presupposition. Therefore, for the purpose of the analysis, I will classify presuppositions as new or informative whenever they lack an antecedent in the article in which they occur. By way of illustration, I report in Table 6 both the number of words (NW) and the frequency of occurrence (n. tokens) of presuppositions encoding each content type, whereas, in Figure 6, the overall distribution of presupposition strategies among the four types of content is displayed. On a visual inspection level, clearer trends on presupposition-content associations are illustrated in Figure 7 to Figure 10, with separate values for every newspaper. The whole pie charts represent the totality of presupposition tokens associated with a certain content type throughout the entire corpus (77.542 words), while the percentages displayed in each slice is obtained dividing the number of occurrences of neutral, evaluative, blasting and ironical presuppositions in each newspaper by the total number of occurrences of that presupposition type in the corpus. These values represent the contribution of each newspaper to presenting the four content types as taken for granted information.

Table 6. Distribution and extension of presupposition strategies encoding the four content types

NSP	Neutral (NW)	n. tokens	Evaluative (NW)	n. tokens	Blasting (NW)	n. tokens	Ironical (NW)	n. tokens
FQ	11.474	232	633	17	201	4	124	5
REP	7.495	181	969	51	131	3	125	3
ESPR	12.547	252	1.377	30	393	7	443	8
CORR	10.244	217	1.819	36	0	0	0	0
STAM	9.742	315	2.686	45	284	6	0	0
MESS	11.299	238	560	14	0	0	0	0
GIORN	4.518	107	478	8	0	0	0	0
Totals	67.319	1.542	8.522	165	1009	20	692	16

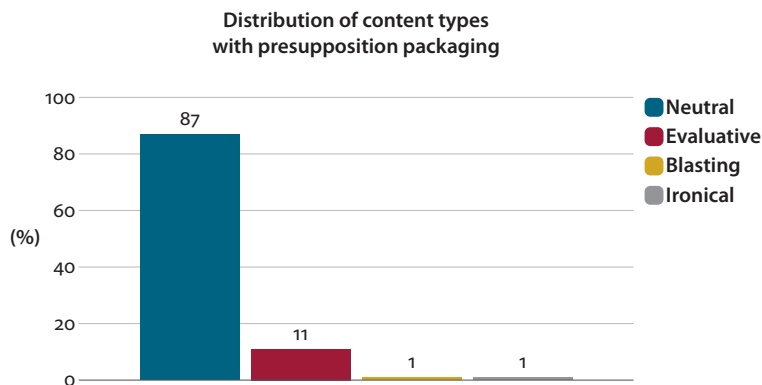


Figure 12. Overall distribution of content types with presupposition packaging

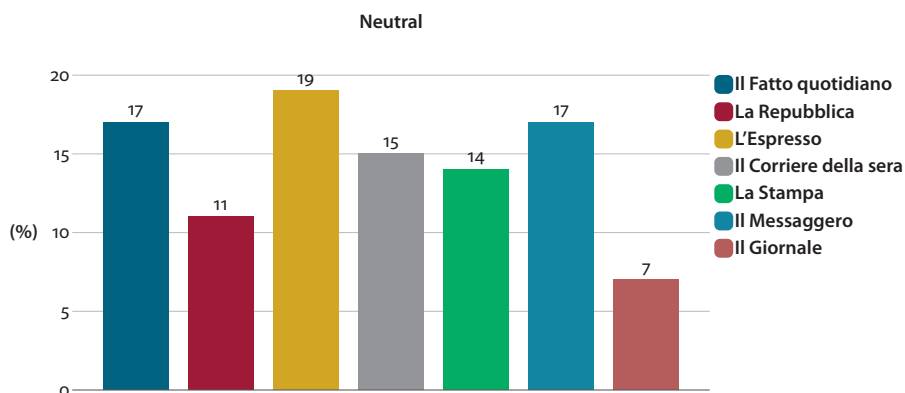


Figure 13. Extension of neutral presuppositions

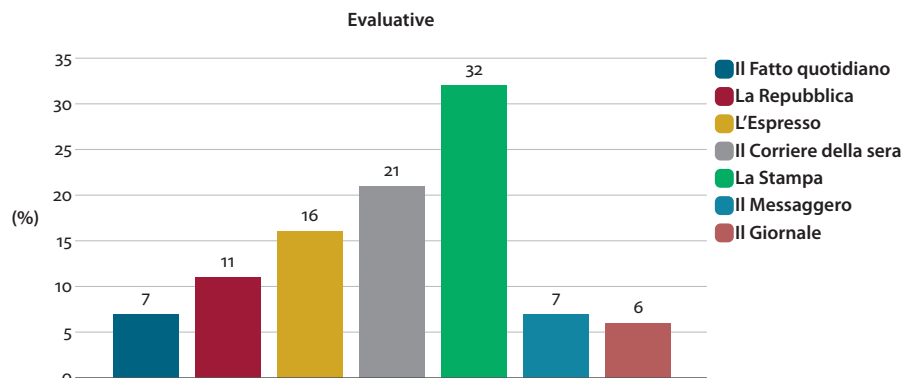


Figure 14. Extension of evaluative presuppositions

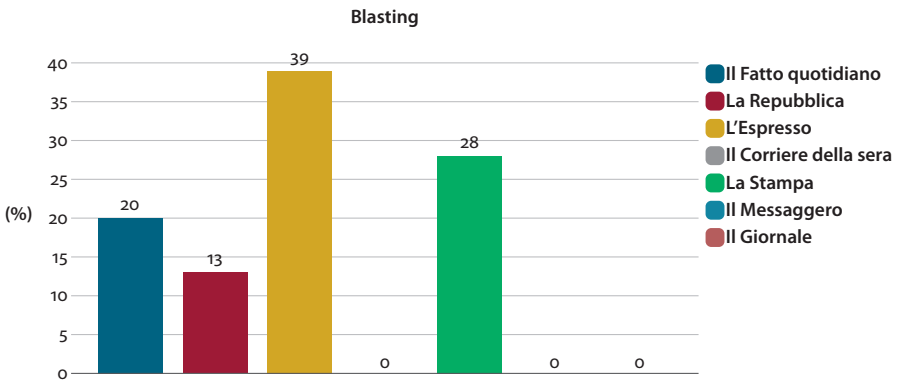


Figure 15. Extension of blasting presuppositions

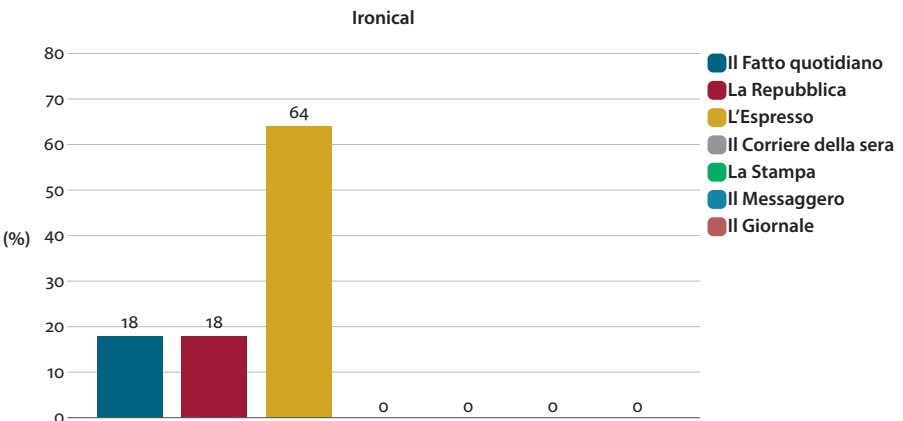


Figure 16. Extension of ironical presuppositions

As can be noticed, neutral presuppositions are more evenly distributed among the seven newspapers (Figure 13) and epitomize the most diffuse type of presupposed content throughout the corpus (Figure 12). Notably, *La Stampa* is the newspaper with the highest number of neutral presuppositions (20%), followed by *L'Espresso* (16%) and *Il Messaggero* (16%). Evaluation is the second most diffuse value to receive presupposition packaging in the corpus (Figure 12). We have seen that evaluative meanings play a major role in consolidating the interaction between writer and reader and they do so by providing “conceptual scaffoldings” to interpret the world and hold views on people and events. As shown in Figure 14, the highest number of evaluative presuppositions has been found in *La Stampa* (27%) and *Il Corriere della Sera* (22%). Blasting presuppositions have not been found everywhere in the corpus. The newspaper with the highest number of presuppositions

conveying criticism are *L'Espresso* (35%) and *La Stampa* (30%). Despite its lower frequency, blast is also a form of opinion making; yet, as already seen, since the aim of blast is also to smear someone else's reputation, it does so in a more direct and potentially challengeable way, which is why it is less frequently made recourse to in a text genre that is generally likely to preserve some "semblance of objectivity". Rarer, but equally impacting, are criticism and evaluations expressed as ironical meanings. Throughout the corpus, presuppositions of ironical content appeared to be more frequent in *L'Espresso* (50%) and *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (31%).

On balance, *La Stampa* and *L'Espresso* are the newspapers in which the four content types in presupposition packaging are significantly more frequent than in the other newspapers. Notably, while *La Stampa* contains the highest number of neutral and evaluative presuppositions, *L'Espresso* overcomes the other newspapers in terms of number of blasting and ironical presuppositions.

4.7 Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to cast a glance at the different functions of informative presuppositions in news discourse. Compared to prior research on presuppositions in the language of newspapers (Sbisà 1999, 2007), this inquiry wanted to put forth a more systematic classification of presuppositional types based on the contents they are more frequently associated with in the Italian press. In fact, far from being merely "informative", that is, new to the readers, unshared presuppositions can perform several other discursive functions variously impacting on the construal of the content conveyed in a newspaper article. Notably, the type of content they carry in a news text may render them more or less manipulative, as they contribute, in one way or the other, to the construction of stances and ideological perspectives on some issues or events. Indeed, as rightfully observed by Van Dijk (1988:121), "events and texts mutually influence each other" and the discursive properties of news inevitably play a role in their mental representation. The results gleaned from the frequency analysis of the types of presupposed content in the seven newspapers considered are also revealing of the characteristic rhetorical profile of each newspaper and, precisely, of the likelihood with which they take for granted certain types of content thus predisposing them to a shallower processing. In this sense, frequency rates obtained by computing the number of occurrences for each content type show that *La Stampa* more frequently uses presuppositions to convey evaluative contents, whereas *L'Espresso* is the newspaper with the highest use of presuppositions in association with blast and irony.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the manipulative power of news would not stem from the content they carry, but from the linguistic packaging

they are assigned. To account for the impact of presupposition on the mental representation of texts and, particularly, of newspaper articles, I have considered the role of “good enough” models of language processing (Ferreira et al. 2002; Ferreira & Lowder 2016). We have seen that, according to these models, the decoding of the linguistic input is never completely accurate and is chiefly aimed at satisficing interpretive standards which may sometimes lead to partial or shallow mental representations of a proposition, especially when a sentence structure appears difficult or ambiguous in parsing. At the level of information structure, it can be thought that a priority in processing is generally reserved to new information or, better said, to information presented by the speaker as her communicative intention and illocutionary purpose (Austin 1962; Cresti 2000, 2018; Lombardi Vallauri 2009). As already said, these pragmatic meanings are normally carried by focused and assertive units of a sentence. As pointed out by Ferreira & Lowder (2016), the human brain is geared to mainly predict the pragmatically new content, which therefore calls for major processing demands. Accordingly, less cognitive resources are left available for the remaining information units, which are then processed in a good-enough manner.⁸ As Ferreira and Lowder (2016) remark, in communication the receiver is busy anticipating what new information the speaker will say, in order to “create a model of his communicative intention that can guide comprehension in a predictive manner” (Ibid.:223). This mechanism necessitates that a greater pool of attentional resources be directed to the representation of new and more informative contents, while fewer resources will be used to construe less informative ones. These latter may then be allotted only a partial representation, possibly lacking some relevant parts of their meaning.

We have seen in Chapter 1 that, as suggested by Sbisà (1999), the likelihood of accepting the truth of a presupposition is also to be owed to the hearer’s resistance to “treating the speaker as someone violating norms of discourse” (Sbisà 1999: 12), and will thus be less willing to challenge the presupposed content in an interaction. For this reason, when a new presupposition is “perceived” as fitting the communicative dynamism of the discourse and the general purposes of conversation, its contribution is taken as cooperative, no matter the content it encodes. On this account, whether it conveys true, false, evaluative or blasting information, a new presupposition will in any case be construed in a way that is sufficiently relevant for the comprehension of the rest, but which, in any case, *does not necessarily eventuate*

8. Ferreira & Lowder (2016: 237): “Good-enough processing takes place for given information, allowing comprehenders to allocate resources to the processing of what is new and potentially informative. The content that is redundant, given and highly predictable can be attended to minimally in favor of content that is new.”

in a deep inspection of all the details of its content, which means that some of its critical points may pass unnoticed or unconsciously absorbed.

Contrary to the analysis developed in Sbisà (1999), the present work does not conceive all new presuppositions as manipulative in news language, since also their role as textual connectors as well as tools to speed up information transmission must be taken into account when characterizing their role in particular text genres (see the analysis in Chapter 3 on political discourse). A taxonomy of the types of information most commonly associated to presuppositions in the press may help distinguishing among uses that can be regarded as “bona fide” (i.e. not threatening for the reader’s capacity to sound information veracity) and *abuses* of presupposition strategies which may instead conceal deceptive traps. Whenever some information is the product of subjective reasoning of the journalist, its truth no longer belongs to objective reality, but to the writer’s *take* on reality. In expressing an opinion or a negative remark, the writer becomes the “new source” of that information and, as such, she exposes – or, better said, should expose – herself to the reader’s evidential scrutiny. But this can only be possible if the structure of information is *one that allows unveiling its truth value appropriately*. In the light of good enough models of language processing, it has been argued that this proves to be easier if the reader is prompted to enhance her attentional processes on some content, and far more difficult should she be instructed to devote a smaller pool of resources to it. From this point of view, processing effort and epistemological assessment go hand in hand in the construal of a sentence’s meaning: the more thoroughly some content is represented in the receiver’s mind, the easier it will be for her to assess the actual source of it. Rather told, in endowing some content with a taken-for-granted status, presupposition again places that content in the epistemic domain of the reader, who then takes on the role of co-source along with the writer (Masia 2017). In this sense, presuppositions work as strategies of “epistemic hedging” in that they mitigate the writer’s commitment to some information thus calling upon the reader to share that commitment with the writer (see the concept of *mutual evidentiality* put forth in Chapter 3). Put otherwise, if the reader accepts to take some (new) content for granted, she also accepts to become an addressable source for it, which eventually makes him less likely to question its truth as this would mean doubting about her own reliability. A more transparent news language would therefore be a language contemplating a more balanced distribution of subjective and objective contents in relation to presupposition and assertion packaging strategies. Contents enclosing subjective views or value judgments of the writer should be made available on surface structure (and preferably asserted, so that their mental representation does not risk to be partial or biased). Conversely, objective contents, bearing no critical or evaluative remark of the writer, may be underencoded with no harm for the overall

comprehension of the message. A sound transparency rule all journalists should then abide by is: *lock the objective, unlock the subjective*. In this way, the reader would be spared the effort of decoding content that is not “perilous” for a conscious formation of opinions on important issues. More effort should instead be reserved to contents that are likely to affect the reader’s ideological perspective and that, to use Rigotti’s words, may “twist his vision of the world”. This power becomes even stronger when it exploits readers’ attentional biases which, as argued in the literature (Schumacher 2012; Masia et al. 2017; La Rocca et al. 2016), are particularly sensitive to the structural properties of sentences.

Manipulating translations

*The word “good” has many meanings.
For example, if a man were to shoot his grandmother
at a range of five hundred yards, I should call him
a good shot, but not necessarily a good man.*

– G. K. Chesterton

5.1 Introduction

So far, we have explored the manipulative power of implicit communication, its use in political and commercial propaganda, how it affects human cognitive processes and how it interacts with the encoding of evidential meanings in discourse. We have seen how recourse to implicit or explicit communicative devices is very often driven by the level of addressability of the content negotiated, and we have sought to unravel how this works for both political discourse and news language. A last but not least step in our journey concerns another dimension in which manipulation may “cast its spell” on language thus making it more insidious for the reader or the listener, and this is the field of translation studies. The translation of the pragmatic dimension of texts is an emerging field of research in which an even newer perspective is epitomized by the treatment of underencoded meanings whose rendering from a language to another may drastically impinge upon the transparency of a text, as well as of the communicative intentions of its author. The title chosen for this chapter contains an ambiguous word, *manipulating*, which, followed by a noun, can be interpreted either as an adjective (= translations that manipulate) or as a verb (= someone who manipulates translations). The first interpretation is focused on the linguistic traits that make a translation manipulative, while the second emphasizes what a translator does (also unwillingly) to make a translation manipulative. In the subsequent sections, I will seek to address both implications of these meanings.

5.2 Pragmatics in translation

It is now well established that among the pivotal roles of pragmatics is fix the propositional content of given utterance types, that is, establish what has been said using those utterances. Secondly, once the propositional content has been determined, the

type of speech act being performed must be identified. The field of inquiry characterizing the toeholds of pragmatic research thus differs from those of semantic research for at least three aspects. While semantics is mainly interested in describing meaning construction and interpretation at the sentence level, pragmatics studies meaning at the utterance and discourse level. Semantics searches for the linguistic meaning conveyed by an expression, whereas pragmatics looks at its contextual meaning. Correlatively, while semantics studies meaning that is (mainly) *explicitly* coded on surface structure, pragmatics seeks for *implicit* meaning which only the context can reveal.

Consider the assertion in (1), as an illustration.

- (1) There is salt on the shelf

As can be deduced, this statement can be uttered to mean something like *The shelf hasn't been cleaned* in a context like *Mark hasn't thoroughly cleaned the house*. It can mean *Take some salt to dress your salad* uttered as a reply to *This salad is a bit bland*. Or, it can mean *Someone has been round the kitchen* as a reply to *Have you found some clues in the kitchen?* From a pragmatic perspective, then,

Ogni frase ha senso solo una volta specificato un sistema di assunzioni contestuali che ne fissa le condizioni di verità [...], solo una volta fornita una descrizione dell'occasione d'uso, che ne fissa l'interpretazione pertinente.

[Bianchi 2003: 19–20]¹

Therefore, by changing the background of contextual hypotheses, the truth conditions of the utterance may change accordingly. Apart from truth-conditional values of sentences, in some cases pragmatics also has the task of fixing the word class and meaning of words that are either syntactically or semantically ambiguous. So, for example, in (2),

- (2) Cleaning fluids can be dangerous

cleaning can be either interpreted as a verb – in which case *fluids* would be the direct object – or as an adjective forming with the modified noun the subject of the sentence. Correspondingly, if the adjectival interpretation is opted for, the sentence will mean “fluids used for cleaning can be dangerous”; conversely, if the verbal interpretation is chosen, the sentence will mean “to clean fluids can be dangerous”. Whether one or the other interpretation should be preferred is not determined by

1. Eng. translation “Any sentence acquires sense only when a set of contextual assumptions is specified that fixes its truth conditional value [...], that is, only once a description of the use of an expression is fixed along with its most relevant interpretation.”

the meaning of the sentence per se, but by the meaning fixed by the linguistic or extra-linguistic context in which the utterance is produced. In the same vein, an ambiguous word like *credenza* in Italian can have at least two meanings: 1. belief or idea, 2. cupboard. So, in (3) from Bianchi (2003),

- (3) Leo ha una vecchia **credenza**
'Leo has an old [*credenza*']

whether what he possesses is an idea or a cupboard can only be established looking at the wider context of discourse.

Interlinguistic translation so far (whether computer-aided or not) has often privileged the semantic and the syntactic level in the interpretation of a source text. The most prominent role when rendering a meaning from a language to another was mainly played by the explicit component of messages, that is, by the contents that are already available on surface structure. Yet, as rightfully pointed out by Farwell & Helmreich (1999: 2): "Language is used not simply to report events in the world. It is also used to convey the rich mental model that individuals and cultures bring to bear on the communication process". Put otherwise, in producing texts, people intend meanings and search for meanings beyond texts. Bringing cultures and mental models is also what allows overcoming translation problems posed by the idiomatic or even proverbial nature of an expression. As a matter of fact, these types of expressions by no means allow a literal translation, but a translation with an expression that is semantically equivalent but culturally relevant in another language. For instance, the well-known Italian proverb *A buon intenditor poche parole* has the following English, Spanish and French translations

- A word to the wise
- A buen entendedor pocas palabras
- À bon entendeur, salut!

On a closer look, the most faithful and literal translation appears to be the Spanish one. Should one literally translate the English and French versions – from English '*una parola al saggio*', or, from French '*A buon intenditor, arrivederci!*' – the original meaning of the Italian proverb would dispel and no longer be understood by an Italian speaker, unless with a greater interpreting effort. Proverbs are thus culturally entrenched expressions that require looking beyond their linguistic and semantic level and assess how they are used to pursue specific communicative aims.

Pragmatically-oriented translation models emphasize the following three aspects of a translation process: (i) beliefs of the translator and those of the author of the source text, (ii) what the translator knows about the author's beliefs, (iii) what the translator knows about the recipient's beliefs. It should be pointed

up, though, that these data are not always available to the translator, in which case he will have to look for information that is inherent in a more abstract level of the linguistic message, namely its functional effect, its information structure and the illocutionary act it performs. The translator's aim should therefore be the reproduction of the same communicative intentions as those expressed by the author of the text, not only on the content level but also in the informational articulation of her messages.

Talking about topic and presupposition, I have argued that not only do they hierarchize a sentence's information in some way, but also shape the current model of discourse of speaker and hearer at each time of the communication process. Shaping and developing a model of discourse entails establishing what the receiver wants to know and how the speaker is expected to package some information to comply with current updating requirements. It is well accepted that, in written language, one crucial aspect in detecting the information structure of a sentence is represented by the distribution of given and new contents and their interaction with topic and focus packaging. It is worth recalling that topic and focus are in no way synonymous with given and new information since a topic can be new and a focus given in discourse. For this reason, besides activation states of contents, other parameters are relevant to distinguish between topic and focus units. These involve the use of syntactically-marked constructions such as cleft-sentences or topic dislocations as seen before, lexical expressions classifying a word or a phrase as topic or focus (e.g. focus-sensitive adverbs). In what follows, I will address the implications of translating different patterns of information structure and how the selected strategies impinge upon the mental representation of a model of discourse.

5.3 Translation and manipulation

The idea that manipulation may be the consequence of given translation choices has already been addressed in earlier contention, albeit not with relation to implicit communication. The main views put forth in this respect basically revolved around delving into the causes behind manipulating a text in translation. Farahzad & Allameh (1999), for example, distinguished between conscious and unconscious manipulation, the former stemming from a deliberate alteration of the target text, due to different political or social factors also related to adapting the text to the target culture. Conversely, unconscious manipulation would be the consequence of lack of linguistic or world knowledge on the part of the translator which leads to altering the text only unwittingly. There are even stronger views (Rabassa 1984) which conceive of manipulation as an intrinsic property of any translation process, given that a perfect equivalence between the source and the target text is not

feasable. This is because not only does translation involve the rewriting of a text but also of its ideology and cultural premises, so that the text “can function in a given society in a given way” (Kramina 2004: 39). Katan (1999: 138) maintains that

distortion in itself is neither good nor bad. It is a way of directing the addressee to what the speaker or writer considers as important. Distortion does not give us an objective picture of reality, but functions like a zoom lens allowing the reader to focus on certain aspects, leaving other aspects in the background.

My general standpoint on the above considerations is that although manipulation is likely to percolate in any translated text, its potential negative consequences in interpretive terms should be anyway kept under control. More particularly, when the target language has the appropriate tools to reproduce as much as possible the linguistic and content material of the source text, this possibility should not be neglected. Put another way, when there is no other choice than alter the target text to make it communicatively more effective for the target readers, manipulation may become the only solution to make a translation functional in its target culture. But, when a greater equivalence can instead be obtained, in that considerable alterations can be avoided, this path should be taken. Therefore, translators should be aware of the phenomenon of manipulation in order to properly evaluate when it can be exploited in service of enhancing the intelligibility and readability of a target text, and when it can cause irremediable distortion of its content in the reader’s mind.

5.3.1 Translating topic and focus

As is known from typological studies (Li & Thompson 1976; Skopeteas et al. 2006; Matic’ 2014), languages differ in the way they structure information in utterances thus allowing different conceptualizations of information units. Often enough, these differences exist despite underlying similarities in word ordering. Affinities between two languages in the thematic progression of utterances is usually more remarkable in specialized texts, in which a more linear progression from given to new information is generally preferred. By and large, this informational ordering allows the reader to proceed from something she already knows (because active in the current universe of discourse, Chafe 1994), towards establishing new ideas. Such a criterion of organizing information in a text is thus intended to comply with the processing needs of the reader or listener.

Below, I show two cases of alignment in the rendering of information structure patterns. In (4), I report an example of English-to-Italian translation (from Scarpa 2008: 163), while in (5), a Spanish-to-Italian excerpt is given from Sepúlveda’s popular novel *El viejo que leía novelas de amor*.

- (4) Each event that is recorded in the accounting records is called a transaction. **Each transaction** causes at least two changes on the balance sheet (not counting the changes in the totals and in the date), even when only one side of the balance sheet is affected.

Italian translation

Qualsiasi evento che venga contabilizzato è chiamato transazione e **qualunque transazione** comporta almeno due cambiamenti nello stato patrimoniale (senza contare i cambiamenti nei totali e nella data). Come nel caso in questione, entrambi i cambiamenti possono interessare anche una soltanto delle due sezioni dello stato patrimoniale.

- (5) Los pocos habitantes de El Idilio más un puñado de aventureros llegados de las cercanías se congregaban en el muelle, esperando turno para sentarse en el sillón portátil del doctor Rubicundo Loachimín, el dentista que mitigaba los dolores de sus pacientes mediante una curiosa suerte de anestesia oral. -¿Te duele? preguntaba. **Los pacientes**, aferrándose a los costados del sillón, respondían abriendo desmesuradamente los ojos y sudando a mares.

Italian translation

I pochi abitanti di El Idilio, e un punto di avventurieri arrivati dai dintorni, si erano riuniti sul molo e aspettavano il loro turno per sedersi sulla poltrona portatile del dottor Rubicundo Loachimín, il dentista che leniva i dolori dei suoi pazienti con una curiosa sorta di anestesia orale. “Ti fa male?” chiedeva. **I pazienti**, aggrappati ai braccioli della poltrona, rispondevano spalancando smisuratamente gli occhi e sudando a fiumi.

As can be noted, in (4), the noun phrase *Each transaction* appears as given topic in both the English and the Italian version resuming a previous focal introduction of the same word in the preceding context. Also in (5), *Los pacientes* is rendered as topic in Italian (‘I pazienti’) as in the Spanish version and, similarly to the former case, they both anaphorically refer to information already introduced in prior discourse.

There are cases, then, in which the need to emphasize a sentence unit may cause divergences in the syntactic ordering of a phrase. Always from Scarpa (2008: 64), the example in (6) shows a different syntactic rendering of the phrase *Programme number 1*. In fact, while in the English version it is realized as thematic, in the Italian translation, it is post-posed to the verb in a presentative construction.

- (6) **Programme number 1** appears in the window and the station store on it appears on the screen

Italian translation

Nella scala appare **il programma numero 1** e sullo schermo la trasmittente memorizzata su questo numero

Among other things, this divergence is also contingent on the general preference of English to put syntactic subjects in first position also with intransitive verbs, while the same restriction does not hold in Italian in which focalization of the object can well be achieved by post-posing the subject to the verb.

Another interesting example is offered by the treatment of adjunct elements. In (7), *by King (1977)* is an agent whose valency status is made optional by recourse to the passive voice. In English, it would be preferably put at the end of the sentence, whereas in Italian a first-sentential placement would be preferred.²

- (7) An evolutionary overview of the geography of the Italo-British migration flow has been given by King (1977)

Italian translation

[...] a R.L.King (1977) si deve una rassegna sull'evoluzione del flusso migratorio italiano in Gran Bretagna.

Scarpa (2008: 163) points out that when a translator comes across a marked construction, she generally follows a principle of neutralization in producing the target text. In so doing, she makes information transmission more effective and more effectively processable. This strategy becomes even more compelling when preserving the markedness nature of a construction would make the target text sound odd or less natural. As an illustration, consider the Italian translation of the following Spanish excerpt from de Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (edited by Martín de Riquer).

- (8) Tenía en su casa una ama que pasaba de los cuarenta y una sobrina que no llegaba a los veinte, y un mozo de campo y plaza, que así ensillaba el rocín como tomaba la podadera. Frisaba la edad de nuestro hidalgo con los cincuenta años; era de una complexión recia, seco de carnes, enjunto de rostro, gran madrugador y amigo de la caza.

Italian translation

Aveva in casa una governante che passava i quarant'anni, una nipote che non arrivava ai venti e un garzone per i lavori della campagna e per la spesa, capace

2. Scarpa (2008: 164–165): “[...] la dislocazione del circostanziale a sinistra rappresenta una preferenza dell’italiano, che riserva la dislocazione a fine frase alle informazioni nuove, mentre l’inglese tende invece a dislocare a fine frase le informazioni periferiche o gli elementi “ingombranti” in termini di complessità e/o lunghezza per non rendere più difficile il processo di elaborazione delle informazioni da parte del lettore.”

[Eng. transl. “Left-dislocation of the adjunct is mainly a preference of Italian, in which right dislocations are generally reserved for new contents, whereas English is more likely to dislocate at the end of the sentence contents or elements which are syntactically more cumbersome and too long, in order to streamline the process of information decoding.”]

tanto di sellare il ronzino quanto di maneggiare la roncola. L'età del nostro gentiluomo rasentava i cinquant'anni: era di complessione robusta, asciutto di corpo, magro di viso, molto mattiniero e amante della caccia.

[Eng. 'He had a housekeeper who was over forty, a niece who was not yet twenty and an apprentice for farming activities and for the shopping, who was capable of both saddling a horse and using the billhook. Our gentleman was close to fifty: he was strongly built, thin, a morning person and a hunting lover.']

In the original text by Cervantes, the verb *frisar* ('approach, touch') is placed before the subject (*la edad de nuestro hidalgo*), while in the Italian translation it appears placed in its canonical post-subject position (*L'età del nostro gentiluomo rasentava...*). In terms of conceptualization of the state of affairs described, the Spanish sentence hints at a progression of informativity from the verb to its subject, whereas in the Italian translation, the subject phrase (*l'età del nostro gentiluomo*) is presented as the least informative element and the predicate (*rasentava i cinquant'anni*) as the most informative one.

Analogous effects emerge from the pairs below.

- (9) a. Con estas razones **perdía** [el pobre caballero] el juicio, y desvelábase por entenderlas y desentrañarles el sentido, que no se lo sacara ni las entendiera el mesmo Aristóteles, si resucitara para sólo ello.

Italian translation

- b. [Il povero cavaliere] **perdeva** la testa dietro a queste argomentazioni e non dormiva per cercar di capirle e di sviscerarne il senso, ma neanche Aristotele in persona, se fosse risuscitato a quel solo scopo, sarebbe riuscito a cavarne fuori e a capirci qualcosa.

[Eng. 'The poor knight lost his head on these arguments and did not sleep to try to understand them and get some sense out of them. But not even Aristotle in person, had he resuscitated for that purpose only, would have made sense of them and understood something.']

- (10) a. [Casi todo aquel día] **camminó** sin acontecerle cosa que de contar fuese, de lo cual se desesperaba, porque quisiera topar luego con quien hacer experiencia del valor de su fuerte brazo.

Italian translation

- c. **Camminò** [quasi tutto quel giorno] senza che gli accadesse nulla degno d'esser narrato, del che si disperava, perché avrebbe voluto imbattersi subito in qualcuno su cui sperimentare il valore del suo forte braccio.

[Eng. 'He walked [almost all that day] without going through something that did not deserve to be narrated, of which he despaired, because he would have desired to come across someone with whom experiment with the strength of his arm.']

Also here, the communicative dynamism goes from verb to subject in Spanish, but from subject to verb in Italian. Thus, the *pobre caballero* (“the poor knight”) appears more topical in (9a) than the *povero cavaliere* in (9b). By the same token, while the original author wanted to put more emphasis on the verb *caminar* (‘walk’), the translator shifted the focus to the adverbial phrase *quasi tutto quel giorno* (‘almost all that day’).

Other interesting cases are those provided in (11) and (12), always from Sepúlveda’s novel.

- (11) a. El cielo era una inflada panza de burro **colgando amenazante a escasos palmos de las cabezas.**

Italian translation

- b. Il cielo, **che gravava minaccioso a pochi palmi dalle teste**, sembrava una pancia d’asino rigonfia.
[Eng. ‘The sky, **threatening a few palms above our heads**, looked like a swollen donkey’s belly.’]
- (12) a. No le agradó **la nueva**

Italian translation

- b. **La notizia** non gli fece piacere
[Eng. ‘He did not like **the news**’]

In (11), it can be easily noticed that the gerundive modifying clause *colgando amenazante a escasos palmos de las cabezas* appears in the rhematic part of the sentence, while in its Italian rendering it is realized as an incidental clause devoid of any illocutionary force whatsoever. Notably, in the Italian translation, the non-defining relative clause has the function of enriching the meaning of the NP *Il cielo* (“The sky”). By the same token, in (12), while *la noticia* (‘the news’) is uttered as part of the focused unit, in the Italian version it is topicalized.

Looking at the above pairs of examples, an a priori consideration that can be made concerns the way the bulk of attention gets shifted from one syntactic locus to another when different strategies of informational structuring are chosen to translate an utterance or a piece of text. In this sense, while in the Spanish version of (12), “the news” (*la nueva*) is presented as the speaker’s communicative purpose, and therefore as an information item to which the receiver is expected to devote a greater attentional effort, in (12b) it is instead presented to the receiver as less communicatively important, thus calling for a shallower processing. In terms of representation of the mental model of discourse, any translation strategy that subverts the original hierarchization of information is also prone to alter the receiver’s conceptualization of the author’s communicative aims. In other words, the set of information goals established by the original author does not match the set of goals stemming from the translator’s rendering of the original text. Such

a discrepancy is mostly reflected in the different communicative effectiveness of the two texts and the way they are intended to shape the mental world of the target recipient.

5.3.2 Translating implicatures

Now, what we said for the micropragmatic level of utterances (i.e. their information structure) becomes even more true when the *macropragmatic* dimension of discourse is considered, namely that level of pragmatics that looks at utterances as speech acts functioning as global units in discourse through which speakers can perform actions and make other people perform actions. As a matter of fact, translating macropragmatic aspects of a text calls for a more attentive look at common ground and the role it plays in facilitating the mutual understanding of communicative intentions. This means that when a translator comes across an implicature, a metaphor or any other type of implicit meaning, for example, she should make the effort to evaluate the extent to which the receiver shares the common ground underlying the text to be translated. This will help her make the most appropriate choice as to leave some content implicit or make it explicit for a more accurate understanding on the part of the reader.

Consider the following dialogue again as an Example (Sperber & Wilson 1986).

- (13) A: Do you want some coffee?
B: It would keep me awake

As already argued in Chapter 3, B's reply to A's offer is ambiguous, in that it can mean "Yes, I would like some coffee" if B is about to drive a long distance home after a hearty dinner (in which case coffee will help B stay awake while driving), or, it can mean "No, I don't want coffee" if B is going to sleep (so, drinking coffee would make her loose sleep over). It should be highlighted that one or the other meaning is derived not only on the basis of the situational context in which the utterance is produced (CONTEXT 1: B is about to take the car; CONTEXT 2: B is going to sleep), but even more conspicuously in dependance on what A and B know about the energizing effects of coffee. This common ground is exactly what triggers and guides the inferential mechanism that leads the receiver to construe either one or the other intentional meaning in the communicative task at hand. Should A completely ignore the energizing effects of coffee, she would not be able to make sense of B's reply, let alone of the implicature it conveys. This is indeed what happens or, at least, may happen when the receiver (a reader or listener) lacks an appropriate common ground to trace back the speaker's actual meaning beyond the literal proposition.

With regard to this issue, some translation theories advocate criteria of *explicitation* of implicit meanings when a common ground is not shared by all interlocutors. Yet, in the case of implicatures, it must be pointed up that fixing a univocal speaker's meaning is not always a straightforward task, given that even more than one intentional meaning can be derived from an utterance. Nor is it an easy task to understand whether and what maxim is being exploited by a writer to produce a particular communicative effect. Identifying the exact content being implied by the author of a text thus involves making considerations of relevance within the overall context of discourse which may sometimes require a more subjective look at the pragmatic meaning of an utterance.

In the state of the art literature (cf. for instance Sanatifar 2016), the problem of translating implicatures mainly raised within the context of political discourse, in which a shared common ground is not always a default condition of a politician's audience. With respect to translating implicatures, Sanatifar (2016: 97) maintains that:

working out political implicatures often requires a wider range of contextual and encyclopedic knowledge from the audience. The situation gets even more complicated when the speech is translated into a distant culture and/or language, where the target readers may share less with the original audience due to being members of a different community with a different style of communication.

He then remarks that, in such a case, “the translator is the one who – on an assumption that target readers lack the necessary contextual information to understand the implicatures – is expected to make adjustments to compensate for the implied meanings, reduce their mental effort and make translation more relevant to them.” (Ibid.:97). Therefore, a translator's task in dealing with implicit meaning entails first of all evaluating what and how much can be left under- or un-expressed in a translated text – based on what she assumes the receiver already knows – and how to make the text more relevant to the recipient so as to spare him or her a cognitively laborious decoding of its main content. Explicitation is one of the most recurrent strategies to achieve high relevance in a translated text and it allows the translator to achieve “the maximal interpretive resemblance between source and target text” (Gutt 1991). Through explicitation, contextual effects of a target text are increased which reduces the need of additional processing efforts. Also, as a relevance-based measure, explicitation shrinks the range of meanings potentially intended by the original author and, in so doing, it links up the receptor's assumptions with the original writer's intentions. Gutt (1991) suggests that one of the solutions to meet this need is by adding footnotes, clarifications in the introduction or preface or comments alongside the text.

Now, the implications of this story are compelling not only for the way a text is understood (we have seen in Chapter 4 that texts are often taken to be understood

the moment they can be “used” for some purpose, no matter how thorough their interpretation is) but also for the way they may induce the formation and consolidation of long-lasting beliefs and ideas in recipients’ minds. This is particularly true for texts aimed at influencing people’s vision of the world along with their choices and behaviors. Political speeches, as we have seen, are among the most powerful text types in this respect and, often enough, their rendering in other languages on the part of interpreters or translators plays a decisive role in portraying the political and socio-economical profile of a country or a political leader in the eyes of the whole world. To better clarify this point, I will discuss examples from speeches recently held by party leaders.

The following excerpt has been taken from Matteo Salvini’s speech in Piazza del Duomo (2018) in Milan.

- (14) Io penso anche ai tanti insegnanti, riempiti di promesse da una Sinistra che li ha traditi. Insegnanti che ogni giorno, ormai, sono aggrediti in classe, anche per colpa di una Buona Scuola che ha cancellato il merito. Nel Paese che ho in testa, oltre ai diritti, torneranno a essere importanti anche i doveri. Oltre ai sì, sarà importante dire di no. **Come si fa a garantire tutto gratis per tutti? Come si fa a garantire che non verrà bocciato più nessuno?** Che generazione tiri su? Che studenti tiri su? Che genitori tiri su? Quelli che se il figlio porta a casa una nota, invece di prendersela col figlio, vanno a scuola a prendere a cazzotti il professore. La buona scuola deve tornare a essere un luogo di educazione, di rispetto, di regole, di crescita, di convivenza, con gli insegnanti che torneranno a fare gli insegnanti, e non i poliziotti.

The bold-typed strings in the short text conveys the implicature (engendered by the exploitation of the Maxim of Relation) that some other political party or the current government itself is about to make everything free for everybody in schools, in the sense that (a) students will not be required making any effort to pass tests or to finish out the school year successfully and (b) that nobody will fail. This content is not openly asserted in the text, but only assumed to be already in the shared assumptions of the receiver. Yet, while for the Italian reader the possibility that those contents are actually shared is somewhat higher, for other non Italian recipients of the message this may not be the case. This is why a translation of this text portion as in (14a) would no doubt be stylistically aligned and continuous with the source text but, at the same time, it would also impose the receiver the effortful task of calculating the implicit content which does not hold in her common ground when she encounters those implicature-triggering utterances in the text.

- (14a) I also think about the many teachers, filled with promises by a Left party who betrayed them. Teachers who are everyday attacked in class, also due to a “Good School” who completely obliterated the idea of merit. In the country I have in

mind, besides rights, also duties will regain importance. Besides “yes”, it will be important to also say “no”. **How it is possible to make everything free for everybody? How is it possible to assure that nobody will fail?** What sort of generation are we raising? What sort of students are we raising? What sort of parents are we raising? Those who if their child gets a demerit at school, they go punching the teacher instead of reproaching their child. The “Good School” must go back to being a place of education, of respect, of growth, of cohabitation, with teachers who will continue to be teachers and not policemen.

As for implicatures, the general tendency is to keep their implicit status in inter-linguistic translation. By way of illustration, I report below an excerpt taken from Trump’s speech for the Union Address along with its Spanish translation.

- (15) To speed access to breakthrough cures and affordable generic drugs, last year the FDA approved more new and generic drugs and medical devices than ever before in our history. **We also believe that patients with terminal conditions should have access to experimental treatments that could potentially save their lives. People who are terminally ill should not have to go from country to country to seek a cure** – I want to give them a chance right here at home.
- (15a) Para acelerar el acceso a curas revolucionarias y medicamentos genéricos asequibles el año pasado la FDA aprobó más medicamentos y dispositivos médicos nuevos y genéricos que nunca antes en nuestra historia. **También creemos que los pacientes con afecciones terminales deberían tener acceso a tratamientos experimentales que podrían salvarles la vida. Las personas con enfermedades terminales no deberían tener que ir de país en país buscando una cura.** Quiero darles una oportunidad aquí en casa.

In the original version in (15), the bold-typed utterances respectively assert that patients with terminal conditions should have access to treatments that might save their lives and that these people should not move from country to country to be cured, but they also imply that, presently, patients with terminal conditions do not have access to experimental treatments and that they are compelled to move from country to country to seek a cure. These two implicit contents originate from Trump’s exploitation of the Maxim of Relation. As a matter of fact, what would be the point in saying that people who are terminally ill should have access to experimental treatments if they already do? By the same token, why say that they should not move from country to country to search for effective cures if, at the moment, they are not obliged to do this? As can be easily deduced, all these implied contents straightway percolate in the Spanish translation, given that no further explicitation is provided. This means that, if an average American citizen can be thought to already know that in the U.S.A. terminal patients do not have access to experimental treatments and that they have to move from country to country to be cured, the

probability that a Spanish citizen may know about these problems in advance is legitimately lower. Therefore, a Spanish recipient will more probably run into *the extra mental work* of reconstructing unknown communicative intentions, thus adjusting common ground accordingly.

From another perspective, the explicitation of an implicature can be regarded as a risky and potentially defective operation, since there are cases in which more than one implicature can be derived from an utterance. We have seen before how a sentence like *It would keep me awake* as a reply to *Do you want some coffee?* can mean “yes” or “no” depending on the context. Consider also the following occurrence from Obama’s speech (2015) as an illustration.

(16) Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well?

At first blush, Obama may have addressed this rhetorical question to actually convey at least two relevant meanings: (1) If you vote for me I will turn richness into a privilege for all people, (2) Today, USA is a country where richness is only for few people.

Now, the fact that a politician may imply more than one proposition in producing an utterance is far from rare. Yet, understanding which implied contents are to be considered more relevant is nothing more than a question of subjective evaluation; and this evaluation is entirely entrusted to the translator. A reliable and sound interpretation of the author’s (speaker’s) intentions thus becomes a fundamental step of the translation and explicitation of an implicature and obviously involves reaching a well-grounded understanding of the political context of the source text as well as of the ideas and stances upheld by the politician. Choosing between one or another implicature to explicitate not only has repercussions on what types of contents *will make up the translated text*, but also on the *construal* that the final recipient will make of that text and of the thought of its original author. So, for example, if the translator chooses to explicitate implicature (1) (i.e. if you vote for me I will make richness a privilege for all people), she will emphasize the fact that Obama will do something good to the American people, should he be elected President. Conversely, if implicature (2) is explicitated (i.e. today, USA is a country where richness is only for few people), the focus of the question will be on a negative aspect of today’s America. Put otherwise, while (1) induces a more forward-looking view on the future, (2) is somewhat bound to make receivers aware of an undesirable social and economical situation of the country.

The conundrum here is rather puzzling and possibly does not admit unique solutions. In a teaching experience at the University of Sevilla, I asked my students (most of them already advanced in translation competences) to give their

opinion on this issue and say how they would tackle the problem of translating conversational implicatures. The judgments gleaned did not all the way converge. Some students suggested to resort to footnotes reporting the implied content and elucidating its general context. This strategy, they said, would have allowed keeping the linearity of the text without inserting too many digressions. Others proposed to report all clarifications in an introductory section or in a preface. (Good point, although this would force the reader to constantly move back and forth from a part of the text to another to unravel the implicatural meaning of an utterance.) Others would simply not ask themselves the question, since they do not deem it safe to take on the responsibility for choosing the most reliable intentional meaning among several potentially left unexpressed by the speaker or writer. One student claimed the following: “if the politician has decided to imply some content because she does not want to openly commit to its truth, why should I make her responsible for conveying a message which I only *believe* that can be inferred from her utterance?”. To some extent, I could not say he was wrong, because the translator indeed has a responsibility towards the target receivers of a translated text. On the one hand, making an implicature explicit is a receiver-oriented strategy, as it increases the relevance and contextual effects of a text; on the other hand, it may risk to imbue the text with potentially distorted representations of reality, should the translator be misled in conceiving the right communicative intentions of the author. Although a translation entails some degree of recreation of a text, when it comes to texts containing ideological content, this practice should be held in check and, in any case, targeted at enhancing the understandability of the text, because texts themselves, often independently of authors, can become carriers of beliefs, convictions and world views.

5.3.3 Translating presuppositions

The considerations made so far do not all the way hold for presuppositions. In fact, while implicatures impose choosing between two or more intentional meanings, when coming across a presupposition, the translator has to decide whether to keep the taken for granted status of its content unaltered or rephrase it in an assertive way. So, as we have seen for topic (and focus), the problem posed by presupposition is one of packaging. Differently than implicatures, translation data show that consistent strategies in this respect are on the whole less frequent. Before delving into the implications of inaccurate translations of presuppositions, I will first discuss examples from Trump’s speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, together with its Italian translation taken from an online Italian journal *La voce di New York* (The Voice of New York).

- (17) I addressed the threats of facing our world, and I presented a vision to achieve a **brighther future for all humanity**.

Italian translation

- (17a) Ho affrontato le minacce che incombevano sul nostro mondo e ho sottoposto a voi **la mia visione per ottenere un futuro più luminoso per tutta l'umanità**.
- (18) In that spirit, we ask the nations gathered here to join us in calling for the restoration of democracy in Venezuela. Today, we are announcing additional sanctions against the repressive regime **targeting Maduro's inner circle and close advisors**.

Italian translation

- (18a) In questo spirito, chiediamo a tutte le nazioni qui presenti di unirsi alla nostra chiamata per ripristinare la democrazia in Venezuela. Oggi annunciamo ulteriori sanzioni contro il regime repressivo e **nel nostro mirino** abbiamo il circolo di Maduro e suoi più vicini consiglieri.

As can be noted from the above comparisons, the Italian translations in (17a) and (18a) display packaging strategies deflecting from those chosen by the original speaker. Notably, while in (17) the existence of a “vision to achieve a brighter future for all humanity” is presented as not known and, for this same reason, indefinite, in its translated version in (17a) the fact that Trump has a vision for a brighter future is rephrased as taken for granted information conveyed through a definite description. Therefore, if in (17) the addressee receives the idea of Trump’s vision as something new, in (17a) the same idea is conveyed as already holding in the common ground. In the same vein, in (18) Trump presents the idea of targeting Maduro’s inner circle as more assertive, whereas the fact that the U.S. has a target in Venezuela is communicated as already known.

The overall effect created by these different translation paths is that *different decoding instructions* are provided to the source and target addressees, with different repercussions on their mental representations of the model of discourse. In this sense, while in (17) the receiver is instructed to process more thoroughly the idea that Trump has a vision to achieve a brighter future for all humanity – which is presented as his communicative purpose in the text – in the Italian translation, the same item of information comes with the instruction to process it less attentively since it does not fulfil the speaker’s communicative aim. The same mechanism can be thought to be at play in the (18)–(18a) pair.

A few lines are also worth spending for the following examples, always from the same speech.

- (19) We believe that when nations respect the rights of their neighbors and defend the interests of their people, they can better work together to secure **the blessings of safety, prosperity and peace**.

Italian translation

- (19a) Crediamo che quando le nazioni rispettano i diritti dei loro confinanti e difendono gli interessi della loro popolazione, possono lavorare meglio insieme **per essere benedette da sicurezza, prosperità e pace**.
- (20) Each of us here today is the emissary of a distinct culture, a rich history and a people bound together by ties of memory, tradition and **the values that make our homelands like nowhere else on Earth**.

Italian translation

- (20a) Oggi, ognuno di noi qua presente è emissario di una cultura diversa, di una storia diversa e di un popolo legato da vincoli di memoria, tradizioni e **valori che rendono speciali le nostre azioni come nessun altro posto sulla terra**.
- (21) With support from many countries here today, we have engaged with North Korea to **replace the specter of conflict with a bold and new push for peace**.

Italian translation

- (21a) Con il supporto di molte delle nazioni qui presenti oggi, abbiamo iniziato un rapporto diplomatico con la Corea del Nord per **allontanarci dallo spettro del conflitto, con una nuova e audace spinta verso la pace**.

The (19)–(19a) pair displays another case in which a piece of information conveyed as presupposition of existence (*the blessings of safety, prosperity and peace*) and, therefore, as content to be taken for granted in the original English text, is proffered as new and not holding in the shared common ground in the Italian translation, where no presupposition trigger is resorted to by the translator (*per essere benedette da sicurezza, prosperità e pace*). Also here, while the target addressees of (19) have to comply with the presupposition that there exist blessings brought by safety, prosperity and peace, the same content need not be accommodated by receivers of (19a), who are instead required to take that piece of knowledge as that component of the message which is intended to enhance their common ground. Analogous considerations can be made for the pair in (20) and (20a). Here, while the existence of values that make our homelands great is conveyed as known information in (20), in (20a) it is uttered in the assertive component of the sentence. An even more interesting case is the pair in (21) and (21a), where a non presuppositional expression in the English text (*replace*) is rendered with a presupposition trigger in the Italian translation (*allontanarci*). Notably, in (21) Trump says that he wants to replace the specter of conflict whereas in (21a) he wants to get away from it. So, if in (21) no

particular change of state is hinted at by the speaker, in (21a), it is presupposed that America, as well as many other world countries, are closer to the specter of conflict.

Besides this, the speaker's communicative intentions may end up being represented in a distorted way. As a matter of fact, when a presupposition is rephrased as assertion, what the original speaker intends to "background" in her message (and thus treat as less relevant) is deliberately conveyed by the translator as foregrounded information (and thus to be treated as more relevant). This translation practice may risk to eventuate in an illegitimate and improper attribution of epistemic attitudes to some negotiated knowledge and, accordingly, of commitment and responsibility degrees. This aspect becomes even more compelling when more consistent translations of a text can be opted for. In fact, nothing would have hindered the Italian translator from rendering the presupposition in (19) as in (22), where the existence of a blessing of safety, prosperity and peace is presented as taken for granted, or the purposive clause in (21) as in (23), in which the Italian change-of-state verb *rimpiazzare* is semantically more homogeneous with *replace*.

(22) ...possono lavorare meglio insieme per assicurare **la benedizione della sicurezza, della prosperità e della pace.**

(23) ... abbiamo iniziato un rapporto diplomatico con la Corea del Nord **per rimpiazzare lo spettro del conflitto con una nuova e audace spinta verso la pace.**

Restrictions on information structural patterns may be stronger when translating into specific languages. We have seen in Section 5.2 that while subjects of intransitive verbs can more easily appear in post-verbal position in Italian to make them more prominent (as in *È arrivato Gianni*), the same configuration would not be allowed in English (**Has come Gianni*), which requires subjects to be placed before verbs, whether these are transitive or intransitive.³ Yet, with presuppositions things are a little different. In fact, if languages can be assumed to differ with respect to preferred strategies of information structure, presuppositions epitomize a more universal trait, in that all languages have means to encode definiteness, syntactic subordination, and all languages have classes of verbs designating a change of state, as well as factive predicates, etc. Thus, from a wider perspective, presupposition triggers are more profoundly entrenched in grammar and *rely* on grammar to project taken for granted contents in a conversation. For this reason, I believe that translating presuppositions in a more consistent and aligned way with the source text should not pose too many problems to the interpreter or translator, who could well go for presuppositional strategies in her translation as well.

3. Except for a few presentative constructions like *Here comes my son*, etc.

5.3.4 Translating vagueness

The last issue I would like to tackle in this chapter concerns the translation of vague expressions. We have seen before that vagueness is a property of some language units characterized by undefined semantic boundaries. Determining the exact meaning of semantically vague expressions thus requires strongly context- and usage-based evaluations on the part of the receiver. As already said, vagueness is an intrinsic property of all languages and is profoundly contingent on the way languages and speakers classify portions of reality. Keenan (1978: 160) also remarks that vagueness enhances the expressive power of languages in that semantic imprecision often “permits efficient communication” when more precise terms to define a given state of things are not available. Yet, we have seen that in certain contexts, the use of vague language may turn out to be manipulative because it instils inaccurate representations in the receiver’s mind, which is why, also in translation, it is important to make the addressee capable of correctly representing the meaning of a vague term or structure. Santos (1998) highlights that in interlinguistic translation vagueness would not by itself necessarily represent a problem, if in every context the translator understands which of the multiple meanings of a vague unit should be selected. However, contexts may not always be helpful, in that they can admit more than one or two translation solutions. In this section, I would like to discuss two cases of vagueness translation, one from an Italian-German interpretation of a political speech and one from an English-Portuguese translation of a novel (Santos 1998). While the former shows a case of vagueness reduction through explicitation of missing information, in the latter, instances of inaccurate translations of vague predicates – together with their interpretive consequences – are discussed.

The impact of vagueness in manipulative texts has been well illustrated by Danler (2005) in his recent works on political speech. Analyzing WWI post-war speeches from Mussolini (Italy), Pétain (France) and Franco (Spain), Danler delves into some recurrent structures of argument omission causing some degree of vagueness at the syntactic level. He claims that verb arguments may be left implicit for several communicative and illocutionary reasons (Danler 2005: 47–48), but, even more tactically, with a view to avoiding too much directness when it comes to delicate issues or to people involved in those.

The omission of complements is consequently also a diplomatic strategy of getting messages across implicitly. Moreover, by leaving out complements, the speaker is not required to put forward any arguments to back up what he is saying. Furthermore, he may vaguely allude to situations or political constellations which might not even be objectively correct without having to assume responsibility for it.

(Danler 2005: 51)

So, in bypassing any explicit reference to obligatory or non obligatory arguments, the speaker simply defers any responsibility to the receiver for construing ones. A quite obvious consequence of this is that the receiver may fail to represent such complements in a way that is in all respects adherent to the speaker's conception, which leads to a distorted representation in the end. In this sense, as Danler observes "the omission [or under-specification] of complements does serve manipulation in political speech" (Danler 2005: 51). As an illustration, I would like to discuss a few examples from Italian-to-German translations made by an interpreter during a speech held by Matteo Renzi when he was Prime Minister in Italy. (Examples have been taken from a corpus gathered by Claudia Coppola, an expert in translation studies, for her MA's research thesis, 2018)

- (24) [...] sulla governance economica (+) europea l'obiettivo della stabilità e della crescita è comune (+) è però necessario anche condividere gli strumenti tecnici con cui raggiungere questo obiettivo (+) questo perché non è solo importante prefissare (+) un obiettivo da raggiungere (+) ma anche determinante è il modo in cui ci si arriva.

German translation

- (24a) [...] was die (+) wirtschaftliche Governance der Europäischen Union ist das Ziel ein gemeinsames Ziel es ist aber allerdings notwendig auch die technischen Instrumente zu teilen mit denen wir dieses Ziel erzielen wollen (+) und das weil es ist nicht nur wichtig (+) sich eh ein Ziel zu setzen (+) sondern es ist auch von wesentlicher Bedeutung wie wir auch zu diesem Ziel gelangen.
[lit. trans. 'As for EU economic governance, the goal is a common goal; it is however necessary to share also the technical tools with which we want to pursue this goal; not only because it is important to set a goal, but it is also important how we get to this goal.']

In (24), Matteo Renzi deliberately uses an infinitive verb (*raggiungere*, 'reach, pursue') which allows omitting the agent of the action. In fact, it is not explicitly mentioned who will reach the above mentioned goal. The impersonal construction in the last line (*il modo in cui ci si arriva*, "the way in which one reaches that") keeps any reference to an agent vague. In the German rendering in (24a), the interpreter opts for rephrasing the two structures as personalized statements, in which the first person plural pronoun *wir* ("we") is overtly expressed.

Similarly, in (25) the eventive NP *della sconfitta di Daesh* ("of the defeat of Daesh") conceals any direct reference to whom will defeat Daesh while in the German translation in (25a) the fact that the Italian army will commit to defeating Daesh is made more explicit through the same pronominal expression.

- (25) il 2017 può essere l'anno della sconfitta di Daesh ma sappiamo che la sconfitta militare di Daesh non è la fine della minaccia terroristica.

German translation

- (25a) 2017 könnte sein dass wir endlich militärisch Da'esh be- besiegen können aber wir wissen dass es das nicht das Ende sein wird des Terrorismus.
[lit. transl. 'In 2017, it may be that we will finally defeat Daesh militarily, but we know that this will not be the end of terrorism.']

In (26), the use of a passive construction (*credo tuttavia che vada evitato*, "I think, however, that it should be avoided") leaves the agent unsaid; so, it is not clear who should avoid turning the referendum into a derby. As in the previous examples, also in this case the interpreter introduces the first person plural pronoun *wir* to clarify that it is the Democratic Party led by Matteo Renzi which should avoid turning the referendum into a derby.

- (26) [...] e personalmente credo tuttavia che vada evitato – l'ho detto in sede di commissione – l'idea di trasformare il referendum in un derby tra qualche leader europeo e Tsipras non è così.
- (26a) wir müssen vermeiden das habe ich in der Kommission gesagt eh wi- dass das Referendum eh soll nicht zum Derby zwischen europäischen eh Leaders und Tsipras verwandeln.
[lit. transl. 'We must avoid – I've said this in the commission, ehm no – that the referendum must not become a derby between the European leaders and Tsipras.']

The examples of vagueness translation discussed in the foregoing basically concern the expansion of verbal argument structure moving from incomplete realizations in the original texts. Although vagueness, on the whole, affects the semantic level of a phrase or sentence, in such cases it gets triggered by particular syntactic strategies (e.g. passive voice, impersonal subjects, nominalizations, etc.).

Problems related to translating vague linguistic units also frequently concern the semantic value of given parts of speech. Santos (1998), in a previous work, analyzes some relevant semantic implications in translating some vague English verbs into their Portuguese correlates. When it comes to vague terms – but the same considerations can *mutatis mutandis* be extended to vague structures as well – if no corresponding vague term is available in the target language, the translator may find herself into making non-objective choices (Santos 1998: 1), taking on the responsibility to cut reality in the target language in a way that is not consistent with the way the authors of the original text did. So, the type of translation choices imposed by vagueness is a choice on which classification system is adopted to render a vague expression in the target language. Analyzing a series of occurrences from the novel

The Pearl, by John Steinbeck, and its Portuguese (translated) version *A pérola* (by Mário Dionísio), Santos notices that some inaccurate translations of semantically vague English terms may lead to alterations in the representation of a state of affairs. For instance in the following pair,

- (27) Then, snarling, Kino **had** it, had it in his fingers, rubbing it to a paste in his hands.

Portuguese translation

- (27a) Então Kino soltou um grito e **agarrou-o**, agarrou-o com os dedos, esborrachou-o nas mãos.
[‘Then Kino gave a shout and caught it, caught it with his fingers, rubbed it in the hands.’]

the use of the verb *agarrar* to translate the English *have* obliterates the stative meaning of the event, thereby rendering it inchoative. A similar case is the one exemplified in (28)

- (28) He was growing very stout, and his voice was hoarse

Portuguese translation

- (28a) Tornara-se muito corpulento e **enrouquecera**.
[‘He had become very corpulent and had gotten hoarse’]

Here, while the verb fosters a more stative interpretation of the condition of having a “hoarse voice” with no indication on when this condition began, the Portuguese verb *enrouquecer* rather presents the process in its beginning stage.

Another interesting case is the use of a gerundive form to translate an English simple past, as shown in (29).

- (29) Kino’s brother Juan Tomás and his fat wife Apolonia and their four children crowded in the door and **blocked** the entrance

Portuguese translation

- (29a) João Tomás, irmão de Kino, a gorda Apolónia, mulher dele, e os quatro filhos vieram das suas cabanas, amontoaram-se à porta, **barrando** a entrada
[‘Juan Tomás, Kino’s brother, the fat Apolonia, his wife, and the four children came from their houses, crowded at the door, blocking the entrance’]

Rather than reducing vagueness in the translated text, this choice instead increases it because, as Santos (1998) observes, *barrar* in the gerundive form may either mean “block” (as in the English text) or “crowd”; so in the translated version, it is not clear which of the two meanings is being intended by the translator.

5.4 Towards translational criteria of implicit communication

Now, building on the foregoing, a few other remarks are worth making. In the introduction to this volume, I have committed to setting out the following research questions:

- a. How should a translator render implicitly conveyed contents from a language to another?
- b. What parameters should s/he consider to ensure the adoption of safe translation choices?
- c. How can untranslated (or wrongly translated) implicit contents cause a text to be manipulative if some information is only partly accessed by the addressee?

It seems to me that finding the most appropriate solution to (a) involves looking for non-objective and non-generalized criteria. To some extent, a sound translation choice would be conditional on the cultural distance between the source and the target text. Sanatifar (2016) analyzes the case of Persian translations of some Obama's speeches focusing on the rendering of implicatures. In a comprehension experiment, he found that Persian versions in which the implicatures in the original texts had not been translated proved to be more difficult to understand than translations in which the implicatures had been made explicit somewhere in the text or in a footnote. This strategy, he observes, makes the relevance of an implied meaning more straightforwardly perceptible, since the recipient is already provided with the exact speaker's meaning to decode. However, as we have seen, some utterances may give rise to more than one implicature if the context does not exhaustively hint at a unique intentional meaning of the speaker. We have also seen that, in such cases, there may be a risk that the recipient might fail to grasp the meaning actually intended by the speaker. But also risky, on the part of the translator, is to take the responsibility for simply "guessing" what the author of a text actually means, when clear-cut cues are not available in the original text, nor in the background knowledge of the translator. Explicitating some implicit content may thus be a *manipulation-reducing* or a *manipulation-enhancing* strategy depending on how accurate and precise it is carried out by the translator or interpreter. When an exact key to interpreting an implicit content can be easily retrieved by the translator, this could be made explicit to increase the informative relevance of the text and allow the recipient to comply her common ground with the knowledge assumptions required to better understand the text. But, when the speaker or writer's communicative intention cannot be properly retrieved, making guesses just for the sake of providing the recipient with a more explicit and outward meaning to rely on may turn out to be an even more manipulative and insidious choice to make. So, as a rule of thumb, one could consider following the tenets below:

- Explain only the implicit content for which you have a unique assertive counterpart.
- When you are not sure about what meaning is actually intended by the speaker, do not commit to guessing one that may be wrong. Render the implicit content as implicit in the target text as well, providing possible and, in any case, subjective, interpreting keys as footnotes or as clarifications in the introduction.

Regarding (b), it can be easily deduced that one crucial parameter concerns what the translator (or interpreter) knows about what the target receivers know, namely their pre-existing knowledge on the topic(s) broached in the text to be translated. We have seen that, although this is a desirable aspect to comply with, it is often far from straightforward to trace back and assess the receivers' previous grounding on what the text is about. Therefore, the translator is expected to make the necessary effort to reproduce in the target text the same communicative effectiveness of the source text, yet keeping in mind that the former was originally conceived for a different readership or a different audience.

A further parameter to consider is the function of a text in the source and target culture. On this account, Scarpa (2008: 115) remarks that identifying the type a text belongs to in the source culture is obviously a good start to gauge what aspects of the translation process should be given more attention and what methodology should be adopted to translate the text. In this sense, if a text is conceived to be persuasive – and, if its persuasiveness hinges on some peculiar linguistic traits – these traits should remain, to a certain extent, unscathed. For example, if a commercial advert exploits presuppositions to pass some relevant message about a product, converting those presuppositions into assertions when translating that ad into another language would risk to abate the persuasive power of the original slogan. The same holds for topical constituents if translated into focal ones. As an illustration, consider the following ad from L'Oréal in (30) and its Spanish translation in (30a).

(30) L'Oréal creates Vitalift complete care for men who still want to look good. Skin stimulated regains its vitality.

(30a) L'Oréal crea Vitalift 5. Un cuidado completo para hombres que todavía quieren verse bien. Estimula la vitalidad de la piel.

In the English ad, the fact that using L'Oréal Vitalift stimulates the skin is codified as topic, and therefore as content already active in the recipient's short-term memory. Conversely, in the Spanish translation, the same content is presented as focal, i.e. as to be interpreted as new in discourse. Also, the English text uses a change-of-state verb (*regain*) which is not preserved in the Spanish text. The interpretive effect stemming from this is that while in (30) it is presupposed that the potential male addressee of the ad was used to having a vital skin which eventually lost its vitality, in

(30a), *estimular* does not necessarily entail that the skin used to be vital. In fact, this predicate can either mean that a particular entity or state of things does not exist and should be created from scratch, or that it existed before but then disappeared. So, the use of *estimular*, instead of other change-of-state verbs such as *recuperar* or the phrastic expression *volver a mostrar su vitalidad*, is ambiguous and fails to properly render the communicative effect of the original message.

Last in order but not of importance is the issue in (c). In the light of the foregoing considerations, explicating some underencoded meaning produces a safe and good translation only when the exact speaker's meaning is identified. This assumption particularly holds for implicatures and vague expressions – which generally conceal a greater bulk of the speaker's meaning – while for presuppositions and topicalizations, which less strongly affect the main content of a sentence unit, but more heavily the speaker's responsibility for its truth, the content they encode is on the whole more textually available. The translator thus need not guess what implicit meaning the speaker or author is willing to convey, but how s/he wants to convey it. Accordingly, if some information is encoded as presupposition in the source text, this means that the author wants his/her audience to take it for granted. Translating it as assertion would thus produce a communicative counter-effect on the recipient's construal of the discourse model: while recipients of the source text will take the presupposed content to be less relevant and unimportant in the communicative task at hand, the target addressees of the same content will decode it as more relevant and worth being attended to more thoroughly. Consequently, that content will not tap into analogous information statuses in the source and target receivers' mental model of discourse. Furthermore, while the content is not taken to fulfil the speaker or author's informative goal in the source text, it instead becomes the carrier of the message's illocutionary force in the target text. So, any translation choice that modifies the informational patterning of an utterance is also likely to modify the challengeability status of an information unit. For example, in (19), while the existence of the blessings of safety, prosperity and peace is presented as unchallengeable information by means of a definite description, in (19a) that same content is no longer challengeable but directly submitted to the critical evaluation of the receiver. Similarly, in (21), Trump simply states that he wants to replace the specter of conflict with peace, while in the Italian translation a change of state verb (It. *allontanarsi*, “move/get away from”) is opted for, which means that the receiver is expected to accommodate that the American people are “close to the specter of conflict”. As a matter of fact, the verb *replace* in no way alludes to the fact that the Americans are involved in the specter of conflict; in fact, this specter may be anywhere else in the world and the U.S.A. just want to dispel it.

Altering the informational configuration of an utterance in translation may thus turn out to be manipulative because it subverts speakers' perspectives and

epistemic engagements which also determine how relevant and purposeful some pieces of information are in a sentence. It stands to reason that drawing up a list of all the good translation choices when it comes to rendering implicit contents in another language is nothing more than ambitious, let alone chimeric. Also, I'm not a translator myself, so I do not think I have good answers ready for any translation problems related to both overtly coded and underencoded contents in a text. Yet, as a researcher interested in both the linguistic manifestations and neurocognitive underpinnings of implicit language, I acknowledge the role that implicitness might play in driving comprehension processes in both oral and written communication. Owing to this, dealing with implicit language properly in interlinguistic translation becomes an even more compelling concern because it may determine how easily a text will be understood by the recipient and the extent to which s/he may end up being manipulated by it.

Needless to say, assessing the use of implicit language in a translational perspective turns out to be a challenging attempt also due to the fuzziness of many implicit discourse devices (see, for example, the similarity of some presupposition triggers with conventional implicatures, cf. Chemla 2008). For this and other reasons, this chapter can only be regarded as mainly exploratory, in that it seeks to unravel how implicit communication may affect text comprehension when reading or listening to texts in a second language. The contention here developed does not purport to be an exhaustive account of how pragmatics can be dealt with in interlinguistic translation, but it seeks to provide a (hopefully) useful groundwork to better delve into the cognitive effects of translating (or not translating) presuppositions, topics, implicatures and vagueness in a target language. A greater effort is therefore called for with a view to setting the path for a more fine-tuned methodology in this domain of research.

The analysis put forth in this chapter did not touch upon other widespread implicit linguistic strategies, such as metaphor, humor and other phenomena of argumentation structure like fallacies, sillogisms, enthymemes, etc. Yet, I believe that homing in on the role and nature of four common discourse devices such as presupposition, topic, implicature and vagueness, which are so pervasive in manipulative (oral and written) texts, could constitute a sound gambit to continue the research on the power of linguistic manipulation along this path.

Teaching how to detect manipulative language

*Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly
danger of taking educated people seriously*

– G. K. Chesterton

6.1 Introduction

The pervasiveness and potentially negative effects of manipulative discourse in some interactional contexts has enhanced the relevance of increasing people's awareness of some of the most common manipulative linguistic tools that can produce deceptive interpretations of oral or written texts. This undertaking is gaining importance as the need of well-informed people and citizens in democratic societies grows. In fact, people generally become supporters of ideologies as well as potential voters of a political party; and, in our present-day consumer society, they also become seduced consumers, often with little or no consciousness of the positive or negative aspects of the products and services we buy. So, in a society and in a world in which much of what we know and of what we do is profoundly conditional upon how verbal (and non verbal) communication influences us, we have to ask ourselves what *our part* is in all that. Moreover, how can we put into practice who we are, what we know, what we do to make our society and our world a better place to live? On a closer look, if we let our mind and behavior be blindly guided by what "we are told" by the others, then our contribution as citizens will not be so decisive, because we will end up being ensnared in the net of manipulative processes without being able to nimbly control their effects. Conversely, if we strive to become independent thinkers and capable of weighing up the pros and cons of what we hear, what we read and what we see around us, then we can definitely make the difference in a world where truth checking is becoming always more like a treasure hunt, rather than an unalienable right of all citizens.

In the preceding chapters, I have only offered a little patch of how manipulative language works, through indirectness and the implicit encoding of meanings, in some very common contexts of language use (political discourse, advertising, news, interlinguistic translation, etc.). Yet, over the last decade, research on this topic is also taking a more practical and educational perspective with the intent to let academic research in pragmatics approach society and make available to citizens of all ages the necessary intellectual tools to "defend" themselves from the potential traps of

manipulative communication, and thus become more attentive and critical readers of a text as well as freer researchers and evaluators of truth. As we have seen in the foregoing chapters, implicit communication is one way to *trap truth into language* because it does not make meanings directly available on surface structure, thereby hampering their full understanding. In Chapter Four we have seen how the mechanisms subserving the comprehension of a text are often targeted at simply making its use adequate and satisfactory (Sbisà 2007) for the reader, although, in this way, one might fail to properly grasp all its contents. When this is the case, incomplete or “good enough” representations of a text meaning may arise, which may be a harbinger of negative consequences when the addressee is supposed to form her own opinions and views on the contents read or heard about. What is important to know, though, is that a speaker can hardly manipulate *with means other than language*. Of course, she may wear certain type of clothing, show an attractive hairstyle, wear certain types of colors, etc., but none of these dodges could match the power of language. As a matter of fact, to shape a complex system of beliefs, views and convictions, an equally complex means is called for. Also, the psychological impact that language has on our mind is impressive in terms of the long-lasting beliefs it gives shape to and the memory traces it can leave on an unconscious receiver.

In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to describe the attempts pursued by some ongoing projects aimed at bringing outside of the university premises current research achievements on the pragmatics of implicit communication and its manipulative impact. A project, which saw the cooperation of an Italian and a Polish university (more extensively described in Brocca et al. 2020) was conceived to train university students (with no previous knowledge of pragmatics) to detect presuppositions, conversational and conventional implicatures in political tweets by Polish and Italian politicians and thus become capable of identifying the content they underencode. Given its ongoing progress, I will discuss some of the data collected for Polish and succinctly describe the experimental design developed for the Italian branch of the research.

Another project I will describe is called *IMPAQTS: Implicit Manipulation in Politics – Quantitatively Assessing the Tendentiousness of Speeches* (Project code: 2017STJCE9) which is a massive undertaking recently financed by the Italian Ministry of Education and has the purpose of collecting Italian political speeches since the end of World War II (1946) until today. All speeches are annotated for the type of implicit strategy used by the politician (presupposition, implicature, topic, vagueness, etc.) and the explicitation of the implicit content is also provided. Another part of the project involves building neurophysiological experiments to test the cognitive processing of implicit communication moving from the linguistic material obtained from the collected speeches. Other initiatives will be outlined which put forth new and groundbreaking lines of quantitative and qualitative research on

implicit communication that help spreading both theoretical assumptions and practical implications of “learning about implicit language and its manipulative effects”

The sections included in this chapter will thus seek to highlight some relevant aspects of how – at least in Italy – a process of academic and non-academic sensitization to the manipulative reflexes of implicit language is catching on and what hopefully positive outcomes it might have for the study of pragmatics at university, in schools as well as a piece of knowledge disclosed to anybody interested in the many forms in which language can disguise truth.

6.2 Critically reading political messages on Twitter

We have seen in Chapter 2 that, within the remit of political propaganda, social media are becoming an increasingly more widespread means with which to reach the audience and sound out the level of consensus in the electorate. Social networks like Twitter indeed allow people to immediately react to a politician’s post, to criticize it or advocate it. However, such interactivity and the speed at which messages are exchanged everyday on this platform, may also give rise to the undesired spread of untrue information or, as they are also called, fake news.¹ Often enough, this is not to be put down only to the manipulative intent of a politician – who may want to depreciate and undermine the reputation of a political rival – but also to wrong information held by a citizen who may further contribute to generate distorted representations on a given issue. To some extent, Twitter messages are endowed with the same persuasive power as a speech held in a political rally; yet, the manipulative effects of the former may be even more impacting, since fake news can be amplified and further modified from a posted message to another. But the rhetorical style of political discourse on Twitter is in no way different than the one observed in traditional speeches (as also argued in Section 2.6), except for the required brevity (ca. 240 words per message) which may impose to resort to the ellipsis of linguistic elements and other abbreviations to allow an optimal balance between exhaustivity of content and communicative effectiveness. But, where is the desire to convince the audience about something, implicit language is never missing. In Chapter 2 (Section 2.6), I presented examples of political tweets performing

1. In the words of Lazer et al. (2018: 2), fake news is “fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent. Fake news outlets, in turn, lack the news media’s editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information. Fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people)”.

an attacking, stance-taking, praising and informative function. The occurrences I report in (1)–(5) are a good example of how some of these content types often find encoding in an implicit way in political tweets.²

- (1) **Donald J. Trump**
 @realDonaldTrump [13.04.2020]
 “...disaster, the Energy Industry will be strong again, far faster than currently anticipated. Thank you to all of those who worked with me on getting this very big business back on track, in particular Russia and Saudi Arabia.”
- (1a) **Donald J. Trump**
 @realDonaldTrump [13.04.2020]
 “I am working hard to expose the corruption and dishonesty in the Lamestream Media. That part is easy, the hard part is WHY?”
- (2) **Boris Johnson #StayHomeSaveLives**
 @BorisJohnson [04.04.2020]
 “I have just spoken to @Keir Starmer & congratulated him on becoming Labour leader. We agreed on the importance of all party leaders continuing to work constructively together through this national emergency. I have invited him and other opposition leaders to a briefing next week.”
- (2a) **Boris Johnson #StayHomeSaveLives**
 @BorisJohnson [19.03.2020]
 “And it’s by this combination of ruthless, determined, collective action, and scientific progress, that we’re already seeing that we will succeed. If we do this together, we will save many many thousands of lives.”
- (3) **Emmanuel Macron**
 @EmmanuelMacron [13.04.2020]
 “L’Espoir renaît. Mais rien n’est acquis. Le confinement doit continuer jusqu’au lundi 11 mai.”
 [‘Hope is reborn. But nothing is yet taken for granted. Isolation must continue until May 11’]
- (3a) **Emmanuel Macron**
 @EmmanuelMacron
 “La solidarité européenne est au cœur de notre lutte contre le virus. Solidarité dans l’accueil des malades, le combat de nos soignants, le soutien à nos économies. Nous sommes aux côtés de nos voisins comme ils sont aux côtés de la France.”
 [‘European solidarity is at the heart of our struggle against the virus. Solidarity in the hospitality of our sick people, the struggle of our caregivers, the support to our economy. We are close to our neighbours just like they are close to France.’]

2. For the purpose of the ongoing discussion, I herein wanted to show more recent examples than the 2015 tweets used for the studies described in Chapter 2 (see Garassino et al. 2019).

(4) **Matteo Salvini**

@matteosalvinimi [11.04.2020]

“Al presidente Mattarella ho confermato che siamo al lavoro sui problemi concreti degli Italiani (salute, affitto, mutui, bollette, cassa integrazione), e che non è normale che nel frattempo il governo passi il tempo a insultare. Avanti con buonsenso e coraggio.”

[‘To President Mattarella I have declared that we are working on the concrete problems of Italians (health, rent, loans, bills, layoff), and that it is not normal that, in the meantime, the Government keeps spending its time insulting others.’]

(4a) **Matteo Salvini**

@matteosalvinimi a [14.04.2020]

“#Salvini: C’è un’Italia che sta soffrendo in silenzio, che è terribilmente preoccupata per i posti di lavoro. Noi ci siamo per collaborare, ma serve che dall’altra parte ci sia ascolto. Certo è che se qualcuno va a reti unificate a dire che è #colpadiSalvini...”

[‘#Salvini. There is an Italy which is suffering in silence, which is terribly worried for jobs. We are here to cooperate, but we need a listening attitude from the other side. Of course, if someone says that it’s Salvini’s fault in an all points bulletin...’]

(5) **Pedro Sánchez**

@sanchezcastejon [12.04.2020]

“Debemos empezar ya la desescalada en la tensión política y dar paso cuanto antes a la unidad, al diálogo, al consenso y al acuerdo. Este será mi empeño absoluto. Necesitamos un gran pacto para la reconstrucción económica y social de nuestro país.”

[‘We have to start a de-escalation in this political tension and give way, as soon as possible, to unity, dialogue, consensus and agreement. This will be my absolute commitment. We need a pact for the economic and social reconstruction of our country.’]

(5a) **Pedro Sánchez**

@sanchezcastejon [14.03.2020]

“Hoy damos un paso más en la protección de pymes y autónomos frente a las consecuencias del #COVID19. Aprobamos en #CMin un RDL que les permite aplazar las declaraciones de impuestos de abril. Seguiremos defendiendo el tejido productivo de nuestro país.”

[‘Today, we are making a step forward to protect small and average-sized enterprises to tackle the consequences of COVID-19. We approve the #CMin, a RDL which allows postponing April tax returns. We will continue to defend the productive sector of our country’]

In his two tweets, Donald Trump respectively presupposes that the Energy Industry in the U.S. used to be strong in the past, by means of the iterative adverb *again*, and that Lame Stream Media is corrupted and dishonest, through the definite phrase *the corruption and dishonesty in the Lamestream Media*.³ So, while the first presupposition correlates with a more praising content, the second is more attacking in nature. In (2) and (2a), Boris Johnson resorts to two praising presuppositions presenting as shared information that party leaders in UK have already been working constructively together through the national emergency of COVID-19 – what could also be a debatable statement – and that there is a combination of ruthless, determined and collective action, as well as scientific progress. In Macron’s tweet in (3) a change of state verb *renaitre* (‘be born again’) conveying a praising presupposition that the French people used to have *espoir* (‘hope’), while in (3a) he is taking for granted that Europe is showing sympathy towards COVID-19 emergency in the European countries (stance-taking presupposition), while this is not the opinion of many other political leaders (for example in Italy). In his tweet in (4), Matteo Salvini uses a factive predicate *non è normale* (‘It is not normal...’) which presupposes an attacking content addressed to the Italian government which, according to him, spends most of its time insulting other opposition parties instead of doing more concrete things for the Italian people. In (4a), by challenging the Maxim of Relation, he communicates as conversational implicature that there is not a listening attitude on the part of ruling parties (attacking implicature). In (5), with the change of state verb *dar paso a* (‘give way to’), Pedro Sánchez is presupposing that there is not much unity, dialogue, consensus and agreement in Parliament (stance-taking presupposition); conversely, through the additive adverbial *más* in *un paso más* (‘a further step’), he is presenting as to be taken for granted that the Government has already made other steps forward to protect small and medium-sized enterprises as well as self-employed workers to tackle COVID-19 (praising presupposition).

Now, the pervasive use of implicit strategies in political tweets has recently urged some scholars (Brocca et al. 2020, among others) to better investigate the effects of dealing with implicit contents on the overall understanding of a Twitter message. Why Twitter? Well, over the last five or seven years, SNS like Twitter and Facebook have become some of the most far-reaching and, to some extent, impacting means of political propaganda whose function of spreading political knowledge is becoming increasingly more relevant than the role played by traditional speeches in electoral rallies or speeches held in the Parliamentary chamber. This particularly involves the youngest generations who, using Facebook or Twitter also for personal

3. Lame Stream Media is the name of most present-day U.S. media outlets which have been shown to be biased in their reporting and are often influenced by leftist ideologies.

purposes, are generally more likely to know about important world and political issues through the world of social media. However, as hinted at before, SNS are not infrequently replete with untrue facts and distorted information which risk to build ill-founded political knowledge and awareness; and this risk is further heightened by the use of implicit communicative strategies which impinge upon people's level of conscious attention on information. As a matter of fact, SNS are increasingly being used by people of all ages and with any cultural background, which highlights the importance of unveiling what potentially negative consequences might result from a wrong understanding of a Twitter message when implicit communication is at stake.

The project described in the following section aims to go in the direction of developing and/or strengthening a desired awareness and capability of dealing with implicit language in order to avoid being trapped by its manipulative pitfalls.

6.2.1 Training students to detect implicit communication: A Polish-Italian pilot study

An ongoing project involving Ewa A. Borowiec, Assistant Professor of the University of Silesia (in Katowice), Nicola Brocca, post-doc researcher of the University of Innsbruck and myself has been devised with the objective of better inspecting the potential benefits of a “pragmatic training” of university students on the use of presuppositions and implicatures in political tweets. In the following section I would like to describe some *ad interim* results from a training session on Polish students and then briefly sketch the paradigm that will be implemented for a replication of this study with Italian students. Prior to this, though, a preliminary reflection on some earlier attempts at teaching students to work with implicit communication is in order.

Marina Sbisà (2007) can be regarded as the first to have brought attention to the didactics of implicit language in school contexts and highlighted, through a series of action research sessions in middle and high schools, its benefits for students' comprehension skills. Using ordinary textbooks, she first delivered some training lessons to students to familiarize them both with presupposition triggers and with different kinds of implicatures. When the students were asked to apply the notions learned during the training, she noticed that most of the times they succeeded in identifying and construing the implicit content in their mental model of discourse, which in turn facilitated their overall comprehension of the whole text.

Sbisà moves from the relevant assumption that a “didactic of implicit communication” should be given more attention to early in schools, because, often enough, a thorough understanding of a text goes hand in hand with a thorough understanding of its implicit meanings, which are more often than not overlooked by a non-expert

reader and, sometimes, even by expert readers as well. Indeed, it is safe to ask: how likely will a reader notice the presence of implicit contents in a text? And, how capable will he/she be of accessing the exact implicit content left unexpressed by the author? Answering these questions is obviously not straightforward, but what we might assume is that, if proper knowledge on the linguistic manifestations of implicitness is provided to the reader, she will definitely gain greater control of the overall structure of a message, thus increasing the chance of reaching a greater bulk of its main content. As Sbisà rightfully observed, teaching how to detect implicit meanings is not only a concern of linguistic education but also – and, in some situations, even more conspicuously – a question of empowering learning skills, which makes the teaching of implicit language and its linguistic features a compelling task of schools, even more than of universities.

La questione dell'educazione alla comprensione dell'implicito si pone, in ambito didattico, sia ai fini dell'educazione linguistica, sia per motivi più generali legati all'apprendimento. È nota la correlazione fra le difficoltà di comprensione testuale e le difficoltà di apprendimento, e noi possiamo spiegarcela benissimo: molte informazioni impartite da testi a finalità didattica sono comunicate a mezzo di presupposizioni e di certi tipi di implicature [...]; quando poi si arriva a dover esibire esplicitamente la propria acquisizione di tali informazioni, chi non ha una consolidata abitudine a esplicitare si trova in posizione di svantaggio. E non serve protestare che non vale, che i libri o gli insegnanti dovevano spiegare tutto più esplicitamente, perché come abbiamo già visto, ogni testo ha comunque i suoi impliciti, pena l'essere illeggibile. Tutto ciò rende la scuola un luogo prioritario in cui esplorare le effettive capacità di esplicitazione del senso implicito dei testi, i modi in cui tale esplicitazione avviene o i mezzi per indurla.

(Sbisà 2007: 160–161)⁴

So, since all texts contain a certain amount of implicit meanings, we cannot expect texts to be any different (also because implicit strategies subserve other important purposes related to cohesion, linearity and communicative effectiveness of texts);

4. Eng. translation: “The issue of training to the comprehension of implicit content is relevant, in the didactic field, both to linguistic education and to more general reasons connected to learning abilities. The correlation between textual comprehension difficulties and general learning difficulties is well known, and we can account for this very well: a lot of information contained in a text with a didactic purpose is conveyed as presupposition and/or as implicature [...]; when it comes to show how one has understood such information, who is not capable of explicating implicit contents is at a disadvantage. And there is no need to protest that this is not fair, that books and teachers should explain everything more clearly, because, as we have seen, any text has its own implicit meanings, otherwise they would be unreadable. All this makes school the best place in which explore the actual capabilities of explicating implicit meanings in a text, the ways in which explicitation takes place and the means by which it can be induced.”

rather, we should start approaching texts differently, with an increased awareness of the contents they can hide and those affecting manifestations of epistemic responsibility on the part of the author (or speaker).

Complying with this line of reasoning, the Polish-Italian experiment described in this section is intended to appraise the implications of Sbisà's study considering political discourse on Twitter. The purpose of the inquiry was to elicit judgments from university students after reading political tweets posted by Polish and Italian politicians, most of which containing presupposition and/or implicature strategies. The types of presuppositions and implicatures the students are required to nail down, however, are those carrying non *bona fide* content, that is, content that could also be untrue and potentially addressable. Since this parameter proved to be a little more difficult to include in the training process, we decided to consider non *bona fide* contents all cases in which an attack, criticism, praise and subjective evaluations were being expressed in the form of presupposition or implicature (Brocca et al. 2020).

For reasons of typological difference between Italian and Polish, the linguistic features chosen for the training addressed to Italian and Polish students are obviously not the same. This depends on the fact that, differently than Italian and other Romance languages, Polish lacks some function words like definite articles, which means that definiteness is expressed through other syntactic means. Furthermore, within the purview of Polish lexicography, even aspectual variants of verbs are generally classified as independent lexemes, which means that, should they happen to project presuppositions in discourse (as is the case of change of state verbs), they should be regarded as distinct triggers than the base lexemes from which they are derived (Brocca et al. 2020).

Polish students first took part in a workshop in which they were instructed to detect the most common linguistic manifestations of presuppositions and implicatures in Polish; then, their observations on the analyzed tweets have been collected. In line with earlier research on implicit communication on Twitter (Brocca et al. 2016; Garassino et al. 2019), we have decided to include the *content* parameter in the interpretation of the tweets. In other words, not only were the students asked to guess whether a presupposition or an implicature was being used by the politician in the tweet, but also to understand what type of content the implicit strategy was associated with. As previously hinted at, the contents considered were Attack, Opinion, Self-Praise and Informative (i.e. neutral information consisting in factual contents or agenda announcements of the politician, cf. Chapter 3). The tasks the students were asked to carry out are organized as follows. First of all, they had to collect a corpus of 300 tweets posted by political leaders in Poland. Secondly, all tweets were classified and tagged first according to whether or not they contained implicit information and to whether the implicit content was conveyed through a

presupposition or an implicature strategy. Thirdly, the students had to identify the type of content (attack, self-praise, opinion or informative) being presupposed or implied. The final step involved a more attentive look of the students at the linguistic features responsible for conveying presupposed or implied meaning. This task was carried out on a final subcorpus of about 120 tweets, of which 60 contained presuppositions and 60 contained implicatures. Some of the most recurrent presupposing constructions in the Polish tweets collected involved adverbial forms indicating contrast, concession and comparison, among others. Below, I report a case of presupposition (from Brocca et al. 2020: 90) triggered by a comparative adverb (*najbardziej*, ‘most’).

(6) **Grzegorz Schetyna** [4.12.2017]:

Za nami **najbardziej** demokratyczne wybory w polskich partiach politycznych. Wybory w @Platforma_org! Ponad tysiąc osób ciężko pracowało jeszcze wiele godzin po zamknięciu komisji wyborczych. Dziękuję!
[‘The **most** democratic elections in Polish political parties are over. The elections in @Platforma_org! More than a thousand people worked for a long time after closing the electoral commissions. Thank You!’]

Here, the superlative triggers the presupposition that there have been less democratic elections in Poland. As a matter of fact, like other comparative forms, *most* entails a scale of values which constitute the felicity condition for using the adverb.

Other recurrent triggers were change of state verbs, of which I report an example in (7).

(7) **Adrian Zandberg** [15.11.2017]:

Dostępność i jakość ochrony zdrowia sukcesywnie się pogarsza. To wynik tego, że PiS **utrzymał** zbyt niski poziom nakładów na publiczną ochronę zdrowia.
[‘Availability and quality of healthcare are successively deteriorating. It’s a result of **maintaining** too low a level of expenditure on public healthcare by PiS.’]

The verb *utrzymał* (‘maintain’) here conveys the presupposition that the Polish government was neither used to spending a lot on public healthcare nor is it now.

Interesting cases of implicature involve rhetorical questions and the use of narrow focalizations (Götzner 2019).

(8) **Dominik Tarczyński** [22.11.2017]

“Sąd uznał „aktywistów” z Puszczy Białowieskiej za winnych zakłócenia porządku, ale nie wymierzył kary.” **Może mi to ktoś wytłumaczyć?**
[‘The court had found “the activists” from Białowieża Forest guilty of disturbing the peace, but it didn’t administer the punishment.” **Can someone explain it to me?’]**

(9) **Dominik Tarczyński** [11.10.2017]:

Zadałem pytanie Sekretarzowi Generalnemu Rady Europy, podałem przykłady i poprosiłem o **LOGICZNE** wyjaśnienie. Kolejny raz zapadła cisza...

[‘I asked the Secretary General of the Council of Europe a question, I provided examples and asked for a **LOGICAL** explanation ...’]

In (8) it is conversationally implied that in not administering any punishment, the court is behaving irrationally, an interpretation derived from the rhetorical question uttered at the end. The adjective *LOGICZNE* (‘logical’) written in capitals in (9) is clearly emphatic and, from an information structural perspective, it realizes a narrow focus of the second sentence. More than requiring considerations on conversational bases, this strategy is rather more closely related to the conveyance of conventional implicatures. As a matter of fact, to be implied here is that the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has not provided a logical explanation. So, narrow focalizations, due to their function of paradigmatically or discursively contrasting a linguistic element to another, correlated (or, better, activated) sets of entailments opposed to the overtly expressed content. This function of focus becomes particularly salient when paradigmatically related alternatives are available in prior discourse. For example, in (10)

- (10) A: What did you buy at the greengrocer’s: apples, strawberries or lemons?
B: I bought LEMONS

The idea that B did not buy apples and strawberries is not directly conveyed in her reply, but can be easily inferred from the fact that in that context, apples and strawberries become alternative concepts to lemons and so, by narrowly focalizing LEMONS, the speaker is conversationally excluding any other alternative that might occur in its place. In order to draw inferences of this kind and of the kind in (9), the receiver need not appeal to any other contextual or background knowledge, but simply capitalize on the exclusive function of narrow foci (which is mainly linguistic knowledge) to understand what other implied meanings are at stake in a message.

On the whole, the students reported to have gained several benefits from relying on some previous knowledge of presuppositions and implicatures. One of them even maintained that “once you know the tricks that politicians use, the interpretation of political discourse is easier” (Brocca et al. 2020: 94). Some other students found it useful to become familiar with the properties and functioning of two pervasive linguistic devices such as presupposition and implicature because this helps better navigate the traps of manipulative discourse.

The preliminary results gleaned from this Polish study speak in favour of the assumption that the linguistic features of implicit communication can be taught and that training has positive effects in disentangling the hidden contents in a message.

Building on the outcomes of this pilot research, the experiment to be conducted on Italian students will be developed along similar steps. Students will therefore be instructed on the most commonly used presupposition triggers in Italian as well as on the functioning of conventional and conversational implicatures in discourse. Part of the training will also involve making students familiar with the four types of contents considered for the Polish study, i.e. attack, opinion/stance-taking and self-praise. The Italian sample will be represented by two groups of students: an experimental group, which will be trained both on implicit strategies and on the types of contents considered, and a control group, which will not receive any training whatsoever. Both groups will be asked to analyze a corpus of political tweets posted by Italian politicians with a view to addressing the following research questions (Brocca et al. 2020: 95): (a) Does pragmatic training facilitate the detection and evaluation of implied information? (b) Are all examined types of implicitness identified at equal rate? (c) If the answer to (b) is negative, what types of implicit communicative strategies are more easily identified and what types tend to pass unnoticed? The testing of a control group in this second study allows verifying how effective the training is and how significant the difference is between knowing and not knowing how implicit communicative strategies contribute, along with explicit ones, to convey the main content of a message. Also, we are interested in pinpointing potential differences between presuppositions and implicatures and, notably, the ease with which one or the other strategy is detected by students.

The detection rate of presuppositions and implicatures will be assessed through an online questionnaire elaborated with LimeSurvey. Students will be presented with more or less 90 tweets of which 30 will contain presuppositions, 30 implicatures and 30 assertive tweets as fillers. Given the administration modality of the tweets, the total corpus will not exceed 90 items. This should keep the overall duration of the rating at a feasible timing for the participants. For this reason and to preserve a balanced distribution of the three experimental conditions, we have decided to rule out the Informative content type leaving only Attacking, Opinion/Stance-taking and Praising tweets. All tweets will be balanced according to the type of content they encode. So, 10 tweets will be selected for each content type, as shown in Table 7.

To gauge both reading and comprehension accuracy, tweets will be accompanied by a verification question asking whether or not some item of information is present in the message. Half of the questions will elicit affirmative answers, while the other half will elicit negative answers.

All stimuli have been constructed from authentic tweets which will be slightly adapted in compliance with the experimental purposes. Moreover, in order to avoid biases due to contrasting political orientations, tweets will be anonymized and shortened in order to avoid the occurrence of multiple implicit strategies in one message. So, each tweet will contain either one presupposition trigger or an

Table 7. Composition of the corpus used for the Italian experiment

Content type	Condition			Tot. n. of occurrences per content type
	Presupposition	Implicature	Assertion	
<i>Attack</i>	10	10	10	30
<i>Opinion</i>	10	10	10	30
<i>Praise</i>	10	10	10	30
TOTAL	30	30	30	30
Total number of stimuli	90			

implicature. The length and syntactic complexity of the items will also be controlled through readability measurements (Lucisano & Piemontese 1988). To better assess the immediate impact of implicit communication on the comprehension of the tweet, participants will be asked to read the tweet only once and straightway answer the verification question. As a further measure of the influence of presuppositional and implicatural wording of some information on the elaboration of the whole tweet, both reading and recalling times will be calculated. Reading times will indicate how long the participant takes to read the tweet, while recalling times – gleaned through the verification questions – will be suggestive of how easily some information being presupposed or implied is recalled in memory by the participant.

In (11), an example of the structure devised for each item is provided (Brocca et al. 2020: 97).

(11) **Onorevole Rossi:**

È giusto che il governo dichiari guerra senza riferire in Parlamento?

[Congressman Red: “Is it fair that Government declares war without reporting to Parliament?”]

VERIFICATION QUESTION: “Did you find the following information item in Congressman Red’s⁵ message?”

Government declared war without reporting to Parliament

Answer options in a 5-point scale:

1. Yes, for sure
2. Yes, I think so
3. I don’t know
4. No, I don’t think so
5. No, for sure not

5. Politicians’ real names have been replaced by invented names to avoid political orientations to constitute a potential bias in the processing of the tweet.

Instead of opting for binary yes-no answers, we have preferred to give participants more flexibility in their replies, since this allows us to observe their attitude to implicit meaning on a more heterogenous gradient of values.

Despite its in-the-making structure, this study wishes to be a valid contribution to current applied research on implicit communication and its comprehension in different contexts of language use. The experiment conducted with Polish students did not collect behavioral data, as the Italian inquiry aims to do. Yet, the students's remarks on their dealing with implicit communicative strategies proved particularly useful in evaluating how effective the training has been and what benefits the students got out of it. As for the experiment with Italian students we expect that

the results [...] will provide teachers and educators with useful information about the use of pragmatic training, firstly, for decoding implied information in reading comprehension tasks, and, secondly and less directly, for the appreciation and understanding of manipulative techniques used in public discourse. If the results of the experiment strongly prove our hypothesis, further steps can be taken to encourage teachers to extend such training to other groups of students and ultimately to adapt it to secondary school level and incorporate it into the syllabi of L1 and L2 classes. (Brocca et al. 2020: 98)

The purpose of these two experimental studies is also to conceive “new models of [linguistic] education that can provide students with key competences in reading and comprehending political messages on SNS. We think that reflecting on the messages of SNS can and should be a timely improvement in language curriculum” (Brocca et al. 2020: 97). Also, some ad interim observations that can be drawn are that the manipulative effects of implicit communication can be taught, whether in a research-based workshop or in a training program of whatever format, and that students can improve their abilities to detect presuppositions and implicatures in SNS as well as in other text genres. What we called “media literacy” associated to the capability of adequately decoding underencoded meanings represents a crucial gateway to assess the quality and reliability of some information, thereby developing informed opinions on relevant social and political issues.

6.3 Making knowledge of implicit communication available to everybody

As anticipated in the outset, despite the importance of sensitizing students to detect the linguistic features of implicit communication, its manipulative threats should become known to people of all ages and with any cultural background. Needless to say, devising training programs to train people to deal with implicit discourse strategies is not always feasible, especially if people outside university and school

contexts are considered. In fact, while university and school epitomize a profitable testing ground to observe the effects of structured courses on the pragmatics of implicit communication, how can other categories of people be reached without including them in academic training? How is it possible to make all citizens aware of the way manipulative language can twist their vision of the world as well as of the way they can be manipulated by politicians or by an advertising message? A more far-reaching and widespread intervention in this sense is becoming increasingly more necessary. The project I would like to describe in the following aims at partly moving in this direction as it seeks to scientifically contribute to the quality of democratic cohabitation by making knowledge on the manipulative traps of political communication available to everybody.

6.3.1 The IMPAQTS project and the OPPP! website

IMPAQTS: Implicit Manipulation in Politics – Quantitatively Assessing the Tendentiousness of Speeches (Project code: 2017STJCE9) is a massive three-year project financed by the Italian Ministry of Education which sees the cooperation of the University of Roma Tre (particularly, of the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures and the Department of Applied Electronics of the Faculty of Engineering) and the University of Florence. Its main objectives develop along two lines of work, one line targeted at collecting a huge corpus of Italian political speeches from the end of World War II (1946) up to present days, all annotated for the most common strategies of implicit communication (Webanno software is used for the annotation work), the other line aimed at building up experiments that investigate the neurophysiological underpinnings subserving the processing of implicit contents (this second thread of the research work will not be tackled in this chapter).

The collection of political speeches constitutes the most demanding part of the project since it will include more than 2.000 speeches organized according to the most meaningful historical and political periods in Italy with a list of more than 200 political personalities. To date, this undertaking will provide the largest resource devoted to political discourse in Italy. The corpus will be balanced according to parameters such as time period, channel (means of transmission of the speech), type of audience (supporters, general public), structure of the speech (assembly, meeting, interview, declaration), social context (institutional, election campaign, others) and topic. Other less relevant parameters will include sex, age, geographical origin of the politician, political party and role at the moment of the speech.

The phenomena of implicit communication considered for the annotation work include implicatures (both conventional and conversational), a wide range of pre-supposition triggers, vagueness either involving the semantic and the syntactic

level, and topicalization, identified by both prosodic contours or by specific syntactic constructions. In light of Sbisà's considerations on the importance of explicitation procedures, this part of the project is intended to enhance the readability of political speeches by *making the implicit content available* to the interested reader. Webanno platform allows placing comments on top of each text string, as shown in Figure 17. So, the explicitation of the implicit meaning is placed right above each highlighted line.

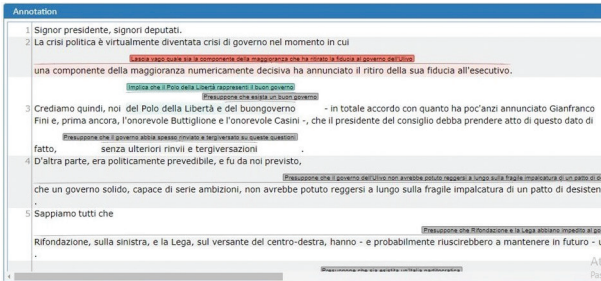


Figure 17. Explicitation of implicit content on Webanno

In order to make clear what category of implicit communication is instantiated by the text string, each comment box will explicitate the implicit content with the following formulaic expressions:

- *Presupposition*: It [the string] **presupposes** that....
- *Implicature*: It [the string] **implies** that...
- *Topicalization*: It [the string] presents as already **active** in discourse that....
- *Vagueness*: It [the string] presents as **vague** that.....

Because specialized terms are also used in the comments, a sort of explanatory vademecum has been made available to familiarize the potential user with the relevant notions constituting the theoretical scaffolding of all annotation work. The user will thus have to first understand what “presuppose, imply, topicalize and express vaguely” means before reading an annotated speech. The vademecum is clearly based on the mainstream literature with a clarification of the frameworks adopted for the analysis, yet, it has been written in a way that also fits the immediate needs of a general audience. So, its structure proves useful both for conducting corpus-based research on political discourse and for simply reading political speeches, but with an increased awareness of all the (implicit) contents conveyed by the text.

Going back to annotation criteria, each category is therefore identified by the above labeling expressions which appear associated with it in the comment. From a scientific point of view, this criterion allows making both qualitative and quantitative considerations on what types of implicit strategies are more recurrent in each

politician's speech and in which proportion they are found – which could allow drawing inferences on more or less typical rhetorical styles of a speaker. Moreover, on more practical grounds, the explicitation of an implicit content also enables the less expert reader to straightway access the implicit content, and this increases the likelihood of more exhaustively comprehending the text. Figure 7 displays an excerpt of a speech held by Silvio Berlusconi in 1997 in an official assembly of the party of Forza Italia. In line 2 he states that *a componente della maggioranza numericamente decisiva ha annunciato il ritiro della sua fiducia all'esecutivo* (“a significantly numerous part of the ruling majority has announced its no confidence in Government”). The comment states that this string “presents as vague what this part of the ruling majority is”. In line 3, *senza ulteriori rinvii e tergiversazioni* (“without further postponements and evasiveness”) presupposes, through the additive adjective *ulteriori* (“further”) that there have already been other postponements and evasiveness on the part of the Government.

Now, given the relevance of facilitating the interpretation of a political speech of any kind, this part of the project could not be developed independently of other important ways of disseminating the offshoots of this work outside the boundaries of academic research. We therefore thought that average citizens might be more easily attained through blogs or websites entirely dedicated to political discourse in Italy and with more tangible and direct evidence on how implicit politicians' speeches are and what impact the use of implicit strategies has on the overall understanding of the texts. To this end, a website called Permanent Observatory of Political Propaganda and Advertising (*Osservatorio Permanente sulla Pubblicità e sulla Propaganda*) has been created with a view to posting pairs of Italian political discourses on a weekly basis.⁶ The discourses are taken from the annotations carried out for the IMPAQTS project as well as from other research work conducted throughout a two-year research collaboration I had with the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Roma Tre. Owing to the dissemination function of the initiative, also speeches on the website are accompanied by explicating comments on the implicit strategies annotated. This website has however been conceived as a more catchy tool to make common people aware of the fact that politicians use implicit communication in their speeches and that this way of communicating with their audience has an overall impact on the understanding of the speech as a whole. As a matter of fact, some politicians use a much greater amount of implicit strategies than other politicians; by the same token, some politicians are more likely to use presuppositions, while others tend to fill up their speeches with implicatures or vague expressions, etc. Yet, based on the discursive features of these strategies as

6. The website can be accessed here: www.opp.it.

outlined in Chapter 1, the ways they manipulate receivers' minds are not the same, which is why a further step in our quantitative research on implicit language involved assessing whether their impact on text understanding could be, so to say, *measured* according to a gradient of values. This attempt has already been made in a previous work by Edoardo Lombardi Vallauri (University of Roma Tre) and myself (cf. Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014) who set forth a system of indexes expressing how impacting an implicit strategy is in a text. Table 8 shows the first version of this system which has subsequently been re-elaborated in the light of more advanced research and findings on the subject.

Table 8. Coefficients of implicitness (from Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014)

IMPLICITNESS COEFFICIENTS	IMPLICITNESS OF RESPONSIBILITY	IMPLICITNESS OF CONTENT	TOTAL COEFFICIENT
Topic			
<i>Topic</i>	3.0	0.0	3.0
Implicatures			
<i>Conventional implicatures</i>	0.0	1.0	1.0
<i>Generalized implicatures</i>	0.0	2.0	2.0
<i>Conversational implicatures</i>	0.0	3.0	3.0
Presuppositions			
<i>Presupposition in Focus</i>	4.0	0.0	4.0
<i>Presupposition+Topic</i>	7.0 (4+3)	0.0	7.0
<i>Presupposed implicatures</i>			
<i>Presupposition+conventional implicature in Focus</i>	4.0	1.0	5.0
<i>Presupposition+conventional implicature+Topic</i>	7.0 (4+3)	1.0	8.0
<i>Presupposition+generalized implicature in Focus</i>	4.0	2.0	6.0
<i>Presupposition+generalized implicature+Topic</i>	7.0 (4+3)	2.0	9.0
<i>Presupposition+conversational implicature in Focus</i>	4.0	3.0	7.0
<i>Presupposition+conversational implicature+Topic</i>	7.0 (4+3)	3.0	10
<i>Pragmatic presuppositions in Focus</i>	4.0	3.0	7.0
<i>Pragmatic presuppositions+Topic</i>	7.0 (4+3)	3.0	10
Vagueness			
<i>Syntactic vagueness</i>	0.0	3.0	3.0
<i>Semantic vagueness</i>	0.0	3.0	3.0

A first aspect to notice is that indexes have been distributed among two distinct types of implicitness, which we called *implicitness of content* and *implicitness of responsibility*. This distinction recalls the considerations made for presuppositions and implicatures in Chapter 1 and, precisely, the fact that presuppositions have the function of concealing the speaker's responsibility for the truth of some information, while implicatures hide the main content of a message. In other words, while presuppositions often leave some content textually available but reduce their assertiveness because they are presented as already shared, implicatures do not downgrade the relevance of some content because they convey it as indirect assertions, which means that the speaker is always committed to its truth, but such commitment has to be reconstructed on inferential bases. On this account, strategies conveying implicitness of content are mainly implicatures and vagueness, because vague expressions do not entirely express a meaning on surface structure and, similarly to implicatures, the actual meaning the speaker commits to has to be arrived at via inferential computation. By contrast, strategies conveying implicitness of responsibility are represented by presuppositions and topicalizations, in that both share the function of reducing the speaker's commitment on some content because that content is either presented as already shared (presupposition) or as already active in the universe of discourse (topic). The suggested distinction between implicitness of responsibility and implicitness of content is clearly a theoretical difference and certainly calls for a more solid experimental grounding to sound its utility in current pragmatic theories on implicit communication; however, on heuristic grounds, it proves useful to better frame the manipulative behavior of the four strategies dealt with in this volume, which I believe strongly hinges on this content-responsibility divide.

As shown in Table 8, presupposition has been assigned overall higher indexes than implicatures. This choice moved from the assumption that hiding the speaker's responsibility ends up being more manipulative than just hiding the main content of a message, because in the former condition, the speaker cannot be addressed for having provided potentially untrue information, while in the latter condition this is still possible once the speaker's intentional meaning has been properly reconstructed. This, as we have seen, also rests on the dynamics subserving the processing of presuppositions in some contexts. In fact, since presupposition packaging may reduce the receiver's attention on some information, the receiver is then induced to not thoroughly evaluate the truth of that information and more consciously decide whether to believe it or not. Even worse, the fact that presupposition draws the receiver's attention away from some content also hinders her from reconstructing the speaker's communicative intention in a message, because that intention receives a packaging which weakens its informativity degree and that makes it irrelevant to the purpose of the ongoing interaction. For this reason, we classified

implicature as slightly less manipulative than presupposition. It can be noticed that within the implicature set, values range from 1 to 3, depending on how important the role of context and language is in determining the implicature. Therefore, conventional implicatures – which are dependent on specific linguistic expressions and thus required little, if no, appeal to context, receive index 1, because they can be derived more easily and only on the basis of linguistic knowledge. Conversely, conversational implicatures can only be understood if a wider context and world knowledge assumptions are taken into account, which is why they are given index 3. Generalized scalar implicatures are in between the two former types, as their interpretation partly rests upon linguistic knowledge and partly on contextual knowledge. So, the higher the index, the greater the difficulty in reconstructing the implied meaning. The same holds for presupposition, which takes 4 because the concealment of speaker's responsibility makes it more difficult to assess the truth of some content and, for this reason, it is more manipulative than implicatures.⁷ Topic is assigned a slightly lower value (3) because, in conveying content which is assumed to have already been introduced in the prior discourse, the speaker's responsibility is not entirely implicit, while presuppositions generally carry content that is presented as "old", but not necessarily active in discourse.

The system of indexes also contemplates simultaneous occurrences of the categories, in that presuppositions may also codify implicatures or coincide with the topic unit of a sentence. By way of illustration, consider the examples in (12) and (13).

- (12) Now, more broadly, each of us has to grapple with some hard truths about race and justice in America. Because, **despite all the progress we've made together**, African-Americans, most particularly African-American men, are still more likely to be stopped and searched by police, charged with crimes, and sentenced to longer prison terms. [Hillary Clinton – 2014]
- (13) A tous les niveaux, **les conséquences néfastes de décennies de politiques de santé court-termistes et sans vision stratégique** se font sentir, au détriment des patients et des professionnels de santé. [Marine Le Pen – 2016]
 ['On all levels, the bad consequences of decades of politics of short-term healthy services and without strategic vision make themselves felt, to the detriment of patients and of healthcare professionals']

In (12), *all the progress we've made* is not only a relative clause presupposing that the policies promoted by the Democrats have produced progresses together with the

7. The system of indexes does not take into account differences between triggers because their implicitness degree is assumed to be equally impacting. Hopefully, a subsequent appraisal of this model will possibly account for the role of semantic and syntactic features responsible for different interpretive processes and manipulative degrees of different trigger types.

American people. This information item is also topicalized in the sentence which means that it is presented as already active in the current universe of discourse. In Le Pen's excerpt in (13), the complex definite description *les conséquences néfastes de décennies de politiques de santé court-termistes et sans vision stratégique* presupposes that there have been negative consequences of previous policies as far as health-care is concerned, but it also implies that policies other than the Rassemblement National (of which Marine Le Pen is the main leader) in no way improved French healthcare. Within the proposed system of indexes, we assumed that the effect of this categorial overlapping on the implicitness impact of a text is clearly different, because when some presupposed content also conflates with the topic of a sentence (as in e.g. *The local school is round the corner*), the amount of attention devoted to it is even smaller, owing to the fact that it is not conveyed as the utterance's illocutionary force. The effect would instead be different should the presupposition coincide with the focus unit (e.g. *Round the corner there is the local school*). So, topic intensifies the concealing effects of a presupposition. In the same vein, when a presupposition also codifies implied content, not only is the receiver required to infer the speaker's intentional meaning, but she also has to trace back the speaker's degree of responsibility, given that presupposition packaging is likely to reduce it in conversation. So, it is far from uncommon to find "clusters" of implicit strategies in political discourses as well as in social media or advertising messages, and these inevitably affect the representation of some contents in the addressee's mind. The goal of the measurement system devised to analyze political speeches, as well as other text genres (Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2020) is thus to account for multiple layers of implicit strategies as well, as exemplified in (12) and (13). Future experimental research will further evidence whether such combinations of strategies also correlate with clear-cut processing underpinnings.

It should be pointed up that the implicit strategies to be focused on in the annotation work are generally non *bona fide* or tendentious, that is, they are not used by the speaker neutrally, but generally conceal some deceptive intent and, for this reason, they are usually associated to non-objectively true content. It stands to reason that this is not always a straightforward evaluation to make because it involves relying on a wide and well-grounded knowledge of the political orientation of the speaker and of the socio-cultural context in which the speech is held. However, more plausible comparisons can be made if the speeches to be likened broach similar topics and are addressed to the same audience. Also, the indexes assigned to each implicit category are to be intended as relative and not absolute values, which means that whatever the scale adopted, what counts is that the differences between the strategies are contemplated. Of course, one may comport with a different distribution of the indexes and conceive implicature as a more manipulative strategy than presupposition, in which case the former strategy would receive

higher indexes than the latter. Implicitness indexes may reflect specific theoretical frameworks complied with in the classification of implicit strategies.

By way of illustration, in what follows I would like to show how the measurement system presented in Table 8 can be applied to a pair of speeches and how their overall implicitness indexes can be calculated. For this purpose, I propose a comparison between a speech held by Hillary Clinton in 2017 and the farewell speech addressed in 2017 by Barack Obama to the U.S. citizens at the end of his second term. The two speeches are entirely reported below and followed by only a part of the computation grid of their implicitness impact.⁸ For the sake of clarity, the annotated implicit strategies have been bold-typed and the category instantiated reported as an abbreviation label on the right boundary of each string.⁹

Hilary Clinton at the Women in Business Conference – 28 March 2017¹⁰

1. Hello! Thank you, thank you all so much.
2. It is great to be back in San Francisco, a place that has a big big spot in my heart and to be able
3. to speak with all of you this afternoon. Please be seated and you can jump up and down, it's been
4. a wonderful but long day I hear. I want to thank Anne not just for her kind introduction but for
5. exemplifying the kind of creative entrepreneurial leadership that she has demonstrated and that
6. so many of you are also part of. I want to thank Alexander Roddy for her leadership and all she's
7. done and to make this event such a success. I am thrilled **to be out of the woods and in the**
8. **company of so many inspiring women**[*ppp+top*] and there is no place I'd rather be than here
9. with you other than the White House. But let's remember what brought all of us here for the 28th

8. A more detailed description of this methodology is available in Lombardi Vallauri & Masia (2014).

9. The labels used in the text are the following: [*ppp*] – presupposition, [*top*] – topic, [*vag*] – vagueness, [*impl*] – implicature. Combinations between two or more implicit strategies are indicated with the “+” sign. So, a string containing both a presupposition and an implicature will be annotated as [*ppp+impl*].

10. Available at: <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/05/31/remarks-at-the-women-in-business-conference-mar-28-2017/>

10. convening of this event. Back in the 1980s my friend Congresswoman Jackie Speier started
11. bringing together groups of women for networking and professional development, for support.
12. Now that might not seem radical at all today but at the time it was pretty revolutionary and
13. Jackie Speier herself exemplifies a life of commitment and service. She has to be in Congress for
14. votes but let's show our appreciation for **her visionary leadership**[*ppp*] with a round of
15. applause she can hear all the way back in D.C. Because just look at what you represent. The
16. Professional Businesswomen of California is now the largest women's organization in the state
17. which probably means it's the biggest in the country – I don't know that but it seems reasonable
18. to assume if you're the biggest in California. But your members are transforming the way we do
19. things, the way we deliver healthcare. You're running cities and Fortune for 500 companies.
20. You're making Oscar-nominated films and leading in every industry from finance to fitness,
21. empowering the next generation of women and girls and taking on some of the toughest
22. problems that we face. That's why I was thrilled that the theme for this year's conference is
23. "inclusion now" because that is spot on. There's never been a more important woman than **the**
24. **woman who stands up and says not just for herself but for everybody else, "we want**
25. **diversity and inclusion in everything we do in our country"**[*vag*]. And in fact, it's not only
26. **the right thing to do**[*top*], it's the smart thing. You understand this. These are not just
27. buzzwords to throw around or boxes to check. The best way to solve problems is to bring
28. together a wide range of people to crowdsource solutions. And guess what? Bringing different
29. perspectives and experiences into professional offices brings not only fresh ideas but

30. higher revenues. And I've been saying for a long time, as many of you have,
that advancing the
31. rights and opportunities of women and girls is **the great unfinished business
of the**
32. **21st century**[*ppp*]. And some days, I admit, it seems like it may be even more
unfinished than
33. we hoped. Because **while we women have made strides in education and
careers**[*ppp+top*],
34. **there's still a woeful lack of women in the upper reaches of science and
technology,**
35. **business and education**[*ppp*], not to mention politics and government.
Women's representation
36. in the current administration in Washington, for example, is **the lowest it's
been in a**
37. **generation**[*ppp*]. But even in a state like California, that is ahead of the curve
in so many ways,
38. the number of women serving in the state legislature is at a twenty year low.
And women in the
39. private sector, particularly women of color, still struggle for representation
in the c-suite and
40. boardroom. But I am here today to urge us not to grow tired, not to be dis-
couraged and
41. disappointed, not to throw up our hands because change isn't happening
fast enough. Or
42. to even take a pass because we think we've done our part. We need more
women at any table, on
43. any conference call or email chain where decisions are made. And a big part
of that is
44. encouraging more women to run for office and pushing the private sector to
do **a lot better than**
45. **it currently is**[*ppp*]. But even that's not enough. We can't stop there. We need
to reset the table
46. **so women are no longer required to accept or adapt to discrimination or
sexism at**
47. **work**[*ppp*]. We need to think beyond corporate boardrooms, beyond corri-
dors of companies or
48. elected bodies, beyond our own lives and experiences to lift up women of
all incomes,
49. experiences and backgrounds in every corner of our country. And a crucial
part of solving these

50. problems is recognizing that as important as it is, corporate feminism is no substitute for
51. inclusive concrete solutions that improve life for women everywhere. Because as challenging as
52. it is to climb the career ladder, it's even harder for women at the margins unable to get on or stay
53. on even the lowest rung. And for too many women, especially low-wage workers, **basic things,**
54. **like a livable wage or a predictable work schedule or affordable childcare are still way out**
55. **of reach[*ppp*]. We know from decades of data that encouraging women's full participation**
56. **is both right and smart[*ppp*].** This data comes not just from our own country but from across
57. the world. When I was Secretary of State I made it part of my mission to try to educate
58. governments that including women in the economy was not only **good for them and their**
59. **families[*top*]** but poverty went down and gross domestic product of the entire county went up.
60. And companies with more women in upper management do achieve higher profits. Yet we also
61. know, many of us from our own lives, that **women still face barriers that hold us back[*ppp*].** I
62. meet talented women everywhere I go who are squeezing every minute out of their 24 hour day.
63. They love their jobs but they can't escape **the nagging feeling that it's a lot harder than it**
64. **should be to get ahead[*ppp*].** I bet just about everyone in this room has had the experience of
65. saying something in a meeting that gets ignored. Ten, twenty minutes later a man says the same
66. thing and everyone thinks he is a genius. And I think we should pool our respective reactions so
67. that you have right at your fingertips exactly what to say. Nice thought. Little slow on the uptake
68. but good idea. And **where everyday sexism and structural barriers were once**
69. **blatant[*ppp+top*],** today they're sometimes harder to spot but make no mistake, they're still with

70. us. Just look at all that's happened in the last few days to women that simply were doing their
71. jobs. April Ryan, a respected journalist with unrivaled integrity, was doing her job just this
72. afternoon in the White House press room **when she was patronized and cut off trying to ask a**
73. **question**[*ppp*]. One of your own California congresswoman, Maxine Waters, **was taunted with**
74. **a racist joke about her hair**[*vag*]. Now too many women, especially women of color, have had
75. a lifetime of practice taking precisely these kinds of indignities in stride. But why should we
76. have to? And any woman who thinks this couldn't be directed at her is living in a dream world. I
77. mean, it's not like I didn't know all the nasty things they were saying about me. Some of them
78. were actually quite creative, ones I hadn't heard before. But you just have to keep going. And
79. even **when sexism and exclusion are out in the open**[*ppp+top*], it's sometimes hard to believe
80. they could possibly be deliberate. Recently, photos have been making the rounds on social media
81. showing groups of men in Washington making decisions about women's health. Decisions to rip
82. away coverage for pregnancy and maternity care, or limit access to reproductive healthcare
83. around the globe. We shake our heads and think, **how could they not have invited any women**
84. **to the table?**[*impl*] Well, a provocative opinion piece in the New York Times this week argues
85. that it may not be an oversight at all but an intentional signal: don't worry, the men are in charge
86. of everything. My favorite sort of take on these pictures, maybe you saw it, was the one of dogs
87. sitting around an oval table and the caption was discussing feline care, I liked that. But it is a
88. cruel irony that **stereotypes and bias run rampant even at companies that pride themselves**
89. **as being forward thinking**[*vag+ppp*]. More and more women have been sharing stories of their

90. experiences in Silicon Valley. Stories of consistently being asked to take notes in meetings or get
91. the coffee, of being undermined, interrupted and criticized in a way that never seems to happen
92. to their male colleagues. Those may seem like small things, but over time they take a toll, don't
93. they? And for some women, the hostility is even more direct, like the Uber engineer who spoke
94. out about her experiences with sexual harassment and spurred the company to publicly admit to
95. addressing this problem. It is disheartening **to hear women at the highest level of their**
96. **profession say things are no better for the young women beginning their careers**
97. **today[ppp+top]**. Women hold just a quarter of computing jobs in the U.S. and that number has
98. gone down instead of up. Women are hired at lower numbers in the tech industry and leave at
99. more than twice the rate men do. And for women of color, the situation is even worse. Beyond
100. issues of bias and discrimination, **the game is often still rigged against working women in**
101. **major ways[ppp]**. What kind of message does it send the world **that the United States is the**
102. **advanced economy with no national paid family leave policy[ppp]**? And less than 15% of
103. workers have access to paid family leave, and those benefits are concentrated among the highest-
104. income workers. You know, it was actually a little better before people knew what was going on.
105. I remember I was a young law partner when I was pregnant and that was a long time ago and my
106. partners just didn't want to talk about it. I'd walk down the hall, getting bigger and bigger, they'd
107. turn their heads, and Chelsea came early. You know, I kept raising the idea of "well what kind of
108. time off do I get?" Well it never happened before, so nobody was talking about it. So Chelsea
109. comes early, I have her late one night, next morning, early morning, my phone rings and it's our

110. managing partner. He doesn't say congratulations. He doesn't say hope you and the baby are fine,
111. he says when are you coming back to work? I said, well I don't know and just out of the air I said
112. "I don't know, maybe four months". Well he had no idea, because he had never talked about it
113. with anybody before. I said, you know, I can probably, you know, pick up some work and do
114. some things in a couple months, but let's say 4 months. That was the beginning of our paid leave
115. policy. But then I was discouraged to read a recent survey that despite the progress in some
116. industries, companies on the whole are actually offering less paid time off than they were a
117. decade ago[*ppp*]. And for too many companies that do offer family leave, it doesn't apply to
118. fathers or LGBT couples or adoptive parents, and that's kind of strange for people in California
119. because you've had more than a decade of evidence that offering paid family leave doesn't hurt
120. business; in fact, it helps companies compete for top talent and to retain employees. The benefits
121. outweigh the costs. So why is it that companies still aren't doing all they can to support
122. working parents[*ppp+impl*]? As a candidate for President, I put out a comprehensive plan, I
123. don't expect you to remember that, in fact there was a recent study showing none of my plans
124. were really publicized or talked about, so that gives me something for speeches for at least a
125. decade. Obviously the outcome of the election wasn't the one I hoped for, worked for, but I will
126. never stop speaking out for common sense benefits that allow mom and dads to stay on the job.
127. After all, I think it's fair to say no good idea has ever become a reality overnight. As our friends
128. in startups know, it takes time and hard work. And I'm heartened by the fact that even as we
129. struggle at the federal level, cities and states across the country are looking to California

130. **and a few other places to pass paid family leave**[*ppp+top*]. There are a growing number of
131. businesses in the country that are leading by examples. Companies from Salesforce to Gap are
132. making real commitments to their employees by guaranteeing equal pay and paid family leave,
133. respectively. And we're seeing exciting initiatives across industries like the EDGE certification
134. program, which was designed to help companies measure and hold themselves accountable for
135. creating a more equal workplace. Google it, EDGE, and see what you can do to advocate for it
136. within your own company. The private sector can and must be an engine of change on these
137. issues, especially in a place like Silicon Valley. Because when you're on the cutting edge of how
138. people work and learn you have both an opportunity and an obligation to institute workplace
139. policies that help employees meet their responsibilities at home and on the job. And then leaders
140. in other industries will take notice and try to match what you do. After all, you're the people who
141. figured out how to put computers in the palms of our hands and you have the tools and the
142. creativity to take on big problems like implicit bias and make the case for those in elected office
143. to follow suit. So despite our stumbles and our setbacks, we've never been better positioned to
144. take on this vital work. In fact, I don't think our country has ever been better positioned to take
145. on the challenges of the future. **Where some see a dark vision of carnage**[*vag+ppp*], I see a
146. light shining on creativity and opportunity. Now, we saw that in real time the day after the
147. inauguration when millions of women and men from all walks of life marched for women's
148. equality, visibility and inclusion. It was the biggest march in our country's history and I
149. delighted at every sign I saw quoting my 1995 speech that human rights are women's rights and

150. women's rights are human rights once and for all. Now, afterwards, there were plenty of people
151. as you might expect, who wondered whether that level of energy and enthusiasm could be
152. sustained and whether it would make any difference. Well I am here to tell you. Last week we
153. saw the first indication that the answer to both of those questions is yes. **When Congress and**
154. **the administration tried to jam through a bill that would have kicked 24 million people off**
155. **their health insurance, defunded Planned Parenthood, jeopardize access to affordable**
156. **birth control, deprive people with disabilities and the elderly and nursing homes of**
157. **essential care***[ppp+top+impl]*, they were met with a wave of resistance. People who had never
158. been active in politics told their stories at town hall meetings, flooded the congressional
159. switchboard with calls speaking out for affordable health care. These were not only activists and
160. advocates, they were people who had something to say and were determined to be heard. Yes,
161. some were new to the fight and others, like Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi have been on the front
162. lines for years. And **when this disastrous bill***[ppp+top]* failed it was a victory for all
163. Americans. But let me let you in on a little secret. The other side never quits. Sooner or later,
164. they'll try again. We will need to fight back twice as hard, not for the sake of politics but because
165. these are bad policies that will hurt people and take our country in the wrong direction. You
166. know, there's a little mantra I've been repeating to myself lately, a little silly, the kind of thing
167. that pops into your heads when you take a lot of long walks in the woods. But as I think about
168. the outpouring of activism we're seeing, despite all the noise and the nonsense, four words keep
169. coming back to me: resist, insist, persist, enlist. We need to resist actions that go against our

170. values as Americans, whether that's attacking immigrants and refugees, denying climate change
171. or passing bogus laws that make it harder for people to vote in elections. We need to resist bias
172. and bullying, we need to resist hate and fear. And we need to insist on putting people first,
173. including by working together to **make healthcare more affordable**[*ppp*], to build on what
174. works, to create better and more upwardly mobile education and employment ladders. To insist
175. that we can do better. That's who we are. We're always pushing towards that more perfect union.
176. And then we need to persist, as we saw so dramatically in the Senate when Mitch McConnell
177. went after Senator Elizabeth Warren and said, nevertheless she persisted, in being told she could
178. not read a letter from Coretta Scott King. So we need to persist to approach future challenges
179. with **the passion we've seen these last few months**[*ppp*] and then bring that to the voting booth
180. in 2018. To tell yourself, to tell your friends and your colleagues, no matter how you vote, show
181. up and vote for goodness sake. Be there. Make sure your voice and your vote count. And we
182. need to enlist, enlist in this effort, get in the arena. Now that can mean many things. Running for
183. office, which I hope some of you will actively consider. Starting and running a business, which
184. many of you have done and are doing. But a business that takes care of its employees. Mentoring
185. and championing other women and girls, giving time to volunteer outside of work. Standing up
186. and speaking out. There's not just one way to do this, there are so many – **there's something for**
187. **everybody here to become involved in**[*vag*]. So sure, the last few months haven't been exactly
188. what I envisioned, although I do know what I'm still fighting for. I'm fighting for a **fairer**[*ppp*],
189. big hearted, inclusive America. The unfinished business of the 21st century can't wait any

190. longer. Now it's the time to demand **the progress we want to see**[*ppp*] and to work together to
191. make it real in our own lives, in our businesses, in our government, in our families, our country
192. and the world. And I'll be right there with you every step of the way. [n. characters – 17.624]

Barack Obama's farewell speech in Chicago – 10 January 2017¹¹

1. It's good to be home. My fellow Americans, Michelle and I have been so touched by all the
2. well-wishes we've received over the past few weeks. But tonight it's my turn to say thanks.
3. Whether we've seen eye-to-eye or rarely agreed at all, my conversations with you, the American
4. people – in living rooms and schools; at farms and on factory floors; at diners and on distant
5. outposts – are **what have kept me honest, kept me inspired, and kept me going**[*ppp*]. Every
6. day, I learned from you. You made me a better President, and you made me a better man. I first
7. came to Chicago when I was in my early twenties, still trying to figure out who I was; still
8. searching for a purpose to my life. It was in neighborhoods not far from here where I began
9. working with church groups in the shadows of closed steel mills. It was on these streets where I
10. witnessed the power of faith, and **the quiet dignity of working people in the face of struggle**
11. **and loss**[*ppp*]. This is where I learned that **change**[*top*] only happens **when ordinary people**
12. **get involved, get engaged, and come together to demand it**[*vag*]. After eight years as your
13. President, I still believe that. And it's not just my belief. It's **the beating heart of our**
14. **American idea**[*ppp*] – **our bold experiment in self-government**[*ppp*]. It's **the conviction that**

11. Available at: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-obama-farewell-speech-transcript-20170110-story.html>

15. **we are all created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among**
16. **them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness***[ppp]*. It's the insistence that these rights, while
17. self-evident, have never been self-executing; that We, the People, through the instrument of our
18. democracy, can form a more perfect union. **This is the great gift our Founders gave us***[ppp]*.
19. **The freedom to chase our individual dreams through our sweat, toil, and imagination***[ppp]*
20. **– and the imperative to strive together as well, to achieve a greater good***[ppp]*. For 240
21. years, **our nation's call to citizenship***[ppp+top]* has given work and purpose to each new
22. generation. It's what led patriots to choose republic over tyranny, pioneers to trek west, slaves to
23. brave that makeshift railroad to freedom. It's what pulled immigrants and refugees across
24. oceans and the Rio Grande, pushed women to reach for the ballot, powered workers to
25. organize. It's why GIs gave their lives at Omaha Beach and Iwo Jima; Iraq and Afghanistan –
26. and why men and women from Selma to Stonewall were prepared to give theirs as well. So
27. that's what we mean **when we say America is exceptional***[ppp]*. Not that our nation has been
28. flawless from the start, but that we have shown the capacity to change, and make life better for
29. those who follow. Yes, our progress has been uneven. The work of democracy has always been
30. hard, contentious and sometimes bloody. For every two steps forward, it often feels we take one
31. step back. But **the long sweep of America***[ppp+top]* has been defined by forward motion, a
32. constant widening of **our founding creed to embrace all***[ppp+top]*, and not just some. If I had
33. told you eight years ago that America would reverse a great recession, reboot our auto industry,
34. and unleash the longest stretch of job creation in our history...if I had told you that we would

35. open up a new chapter with the Cuban people, shut down Iran's nuclear weapons program
36. without firing a shot, and take out the mastermind of 9/11...if I had told you that we would win
37. marriage equality, and secure the right to health insurance for another 20 million of our fellow
38. citizens– you might have said our sights were set a little too high. But that's what we did. That's
39. what you did. You were the change. You answered people's hopes, and because of you, by
40. almost every measure, America is a better, **stronger place than it was when we started**[*ppp*].
41. In ten days, the world will witness a hallmark of our democracy: the peaceful transfer of power
42. from one freely-elected president to the next. I committed to President-Elect Trump that my
43. administration would ensure the smoothest possible transition, just as President Bush did for
44. me. Because it's up to all of us to make sure our government can help us meet the many
45. challenges we still face. We have what we need to do so. After all, **we remain the wealthiest,**
46. **most powerful, and most respected nation on Earth**[*ppp*]. **Our youth and drive, our**
47. **diversity and openness, our boundless capacity for risk and reinvention**[*ppp+top*] mean
48. that the future should be ours. But that potential will be realized only if our democracy
49. works. Only if our politics reflects **the decency of our people**[*ppp*]. Only if all of us, regardless
50. of our party affiliation or particular interest, help **restore the sense of common purpose**[*ppp*]
51. that we so badly need right now. That's what I want to focus on tonight– the state of our
52. democracy. Understand, democracy does not require uniformity. Our founders quarreled and
53. compromised, and expected us to do the same. But they knew that democracy does require a
54. basic sense of solidarity – the idea that for all our outward differences, we are all in this together;

55. that we rise or fall as one. There have been moments throughout our history that threatened to
56. rupture that solidarity. The beginning of this century has been one of those times. A shrinking
57. world, growing inequality; demographic change and the specter of terrorism – these forces
58. haven't just **tested our security and prosperity**[top], but our democracy as well. And how we
59. meet these challenges to our democracy will determine our ability to educate our kids, and create
60. good jobs, and protect our homeland. In other words, it will determine our future. Our
61. democracy won't work without a sense that everyone has economic opportunity. Today, **the**
62. **economy is growing again**[ppp]; **wages, incomes, home values, and retirement accounts are**
63. **rising again**[ppp]; **poverty is falling again**[ppp]. The wealthy are paying a fairer share of taxes
64. even as the stock market shatters records. The unemployment rate is near a ten-year low. The
65. uninsured rate has never, ever been lower. Health care costs are rising at the slowest rate in fifty
66. years. And if anyone can put together a plan that is demonstrably better than **the improvements**
67. **we've made to our health care system**[ppp+top] – that covers as many people at less cost – I
68. will publicly support it. That, after all, is why we serve – to make people's lives better, not
69. worse. But for all **the real progress we've made**[ppp], we know it's not enough. Our economy
70. doesn't work as well or grow as fast **when a few prosper at the expense of a growing middle**
71. **class**[ppp]. But stark inequality is also corrosive to our democratic principles. **While the top**
72. **one percent has amassed a bigger share of wealth and income**[ppp+top], too many families,
73. in inner cities and rural counties, have been left behind – the laid-off factory worker; the waitress
74. and health care worker who struggle to pay the bills – convinced that the game is fixed against

75. them, that their government only serves the interests of the powerful – a recipe for more
76. cynicism and polarization in our politics. There are no quick fixes to this long-term trend. I agree
77. that our trade should be fair and not just free. But the next wave of economic dislocation won't
78. come from overseas. It will come from the relentless pace of automation that makes many good,
79. middle-class jobs obsolete. And so we must forge a new social compact – to guarantee all our
80. kids the education they need; to give workers the power to unionize for better wages; to update
81. the social safety net to reflect the way we live now and make more reforms to the tax code so
82. corporations and individuals who reap the most from the new economy don't avoid their
83. obligations to the country that's made their success possible. We can argue about how to best
84. achieve these goals. But we can't be complacent about the goals themselves. For if we don't
85. create opportunity for all people, **the disaffection and division that has stalled our**
86. **progress**[*ppp+top*] will only sharpen in years to come. There's a second threat to our
87. democracy – one as old as our nation itself. After my election, there was talk of a post-racial
88. America. Such a vision, however well-intended, was never realistic. For **race remains a potent**
89. **and often divisive force in our society**[*ppp*]. I've lived long enough to know that race relations
90. are better than they were ten, or twenty, or thirty years ago – you can see it not just in
91. **statistics**[*top*], but in the attitudes of young Americans across the political spectrum. But we're
92. not where we need to be. All of us have more work to do. After all, if every economic issue is
93. framed as a struggle between a hardworking white middle class and undeserving minorities, then
94. workers of all shades will be left fighting for scraps while the wealthy withdraw further into their

95. private enclaves. **If we decline to invest in the children of immigrants***[top]*, just because they
96. don't look like us, we diminish the prospects of our own children – because those brown kids
97. will represent a larger share of America's workforce. And our economy doesn't have to be a
98. zero-sum game. Last year, incomes rose for all races, all age groups, for men and for
99. women. Going forward, we must uphold laws against discrimination – in hiring, in housing, in
100. education and the criminal justice system. That's what our Constitution and highest ideals
101. require. But laws alone won't be enough. Hearts must change. If our democracy is to work in
102. this increasingly diverse nation, each one of us must try to heed the advice of one of the great
103. characters in American fiction, Atticus Finch, who said "You never really understand a person
104. until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around
105. in it." For blacks and other minorities, it means tying our own struggles for justice to the
106. challenges that a lot of people in this country face – the refugee, the immigrant, the rural poor,
107. the transgender American, and also the middle-aged white man who from the outside may seem
108. like he's got all the advantages, but who's seen his world upended by economic, cultural, and
109. technological change. For white Americans, it means acknowledging that the effects of slavery
110. and Jim Crow didn't suddenly vanish in the '60s; that **when minority groups voice**
111. **discontent***[ppp+top]*, they're not just engaging in reverse racism or practicing political
112. correctness; that when they wage peaceful protest, they're not demanding special treatment, but
113. the equal treatment our Founders promised. For native-born Americans, it means reminding
114. ourselves that the stereotypes about immigrants today were said, almost word for word, about

115. the Irish, Italians, and Poles. America wasn't weakened by the presence of these newcomers;
116. they embraced this nation's creed, and it was strengthened. So regardless of the station we
117. occupy; we have to try harder; to start with the premise that each of our fellow citizens loves this
118. country just as much as we do; that they value hard work and family like we do; that their
119. children are just as curious and hopeful and worthy of love as our own. None of this is easy. For
120. too many of us, it's become safer to retreat into our own bubbles, whether in our neighborhoods
121. or college campuses or places of worship or our social media feeds, surrounded by people who
122. look like us and share the same political outlook and never challenge our assumptions. **The rise**
123. **of naked partisanship, increasing economic and regional stratification, the splintering of**
124. **our media into a channel for every taste***[ppp]* – all this makes this great sorting seem natural,
125. even inevitable. And increasingly, we become so secure in our bubbles that we accept only
126. information, whether true or not, that fits our opinions, instead of basing our opinions on the
127. evidence that's out there. If you're tired of arguing with strangers on the internet, try to talk with
128. one in real. This trend represents a third threat to our democracy. Politics is a battle of ideas; in
129. the course of a healthy debate, we'll prioritize different goals, and the different means of
130. reaching them. **But without some common baseline of facts***[top]*; **without a willingness to**
131. **admit new information, and concede that your opponent is making a fair point, and that**
132. **science and reason matter***[top]*, **we'll keep talking past each other***[ppp]*, making common
133. ground and compromise impossible. Isn't that part of **what makes politics so**
134. **dispiriting***[ppp]*? **How can elected officials rage about deficits when we propose to spend**

135. **money on preschool for kids, but not when we're cutting taxes for corporations**[*ppp*]? **How**
136. **do we excuse ethical lapses in our own party, but pounce when the other party does the**
137. **same thing**[*ppp*]? It's not just dishonest, this selective sorting of the facts; it's self-
138. defeating. Because as my mother used to tell me, reality has a way of catching up with you.
139. Take the challenge of climate change. In just eight years, we've halved our dependence on
140. foreign oil, doubled our renewable energy, and led the world to an agreement that has the
141. promise to save this planet. But **without bolder action**[*top+impl*], our children won't have time
142. to debate the existence of climate change; they'll be busy dealing with its effects: environmental
143. disasters, economic disruptions, and waves of climate refugees seeking sanctuary. Now, we can
144. and should argue about the best approach to the problem. But **to simply deny the**
145. **problem**[*top+impl*] not only **betrays future generations**[*top*]; it betrays the **essential spirit of**
146. **innovation and practical problem-solving that guided our Founders**[*ppp*]. It's that spirit – a
147. faith in reason, and enterprise, and the primacy of right over might, **that allowed us to resist the**
148. **lure of fascism and tyranny during the Great Depression, and build a post-World War II**
149. **order with other democracies**[*top*], an order based not just on military power or national
150. affiliations but on principles – the rule of law, human rights, freedoms of religion, speech,
151. assembly, and an independent press. That order is now being challenged – first by violent
152. fanatics who claim to speak for Islam; more recently by **autocrats in foreign capitals**[*vag*] who
153. see free markets, open democracies, and civil society itself as a threat to their power. **The peril**
154. **each poses to our democracy**[*ppp+top*] is more far-reaching than a car bomb or a missile. It

155. represents the fear of change[*ppp*]; the fear of people who look or speak or pray
156. differently[*ppp*]; a contempt for the rule of law that holds leaders accountable[*ppp*]; an
157. intolerance of dissent and free thought; a belief that the sword or the gun or the bomb or
158. propaganda machine is the ultimate arbiter of what's true and what's right. Because of the
159. extraordinary courage of our men and women in uniform[*ppp*], and the intelligence officers,
160. law enforcement, and diplomats who support them, no foreign terrorist organization has
161. successfully planned and executed an attack on our homeland these past eight years; and
162. although Boston and Orlando remind us of how dangerous radicalization can be, our law
163. enforcement agencies are more effective and vigilant than ever. We've taken out tens of
164. thousands of terrorists – including Osama bin Laden. The global coalition we're leading against
165. ISIL has taken out their leaders, and taken away about half their territory. ISIL will be destroyed,
166. and no one who threatens America will ever be safe. To all who serve, it has been the honor of
167. my lifetime to be your Commander-in-Chief. But protecting our way of life requires more than
168. our military. Democracy can buckle when we give in to fear. So just as we, as citizens, must
169. remain vigilant against external aggression, we must guard against a weakening of the values
170. that make us who we are. That's why, for the past eight years, I've worked to put the fight
171. against terrorism on a firm legal footing[*ppp*]. That's why we've ended torture, worked to
172. close Gitmo, and reform our laws governing surveillance to protect privacy and civil
173. liberties[*ppp*]. That's why I reject discrimination against Muslim Americans. That's why we
174. cannot withdraw from global fights – to expand democracy, and human rights, women's rights,

175. and LGBT rights – no matter how imperfect our efforts, no matter how expedient ignoring such
176. values may seem. For the fight against extremism and intolerance and sectarianism are of a
177. piece with the fight against authoritarianism and nationalist aggression. If the scope of freedom
178. and respect for the rule of law shrinks around the world, the likelihood of war within and
179. between nations increases, and our own freedoms will eventually be threatened. So let's be
180. vigilant, but not afraid. ISIL will try to kill innocent people. But they cannot defeat America
181. unless we betray our Constitution and our principles in the fight. Rivals like Russia or China
182. cannot match our influence around the world – unless we give up what we stand for, and turn
183. ourselves into just another big country that bullies smaller neighbors. Which brings me to my
184. final point – our democracy is threatened **whenever we take it for granted**[*ppp*]. All of us,
185. regardless of party, should throw ourselves into the task of **rebuilding our democratic**
186. **institutions**[*ppp*]. **When voting rates are some of the lowest among advanced**
187. **democracies**[*ppp+top*], we should make it easier, not harder, to vote. **When trust in our**
188. **institutions is low**[*ppp+top*], we should reduce **the corrosive influence of money in our**
189. **politics**[*ppp*], and insist on the principles of transparency and ethics in public service. **When**
190. **Congress is dysfunctional**[*ppp+top*], we should draw our districts to encourage politicians to
191. cater to common sense and not rigid extremes. And all of this depends on our participation; on
192. each of us accepting the responsibility of citizenship, regardless of which way the pendulum of
193. power swings. Our Constitution is a remarkable, beautiful gift. But it's really just a piece of
194. parchment. It has no power on its own. We, the people, give it power – with our participation,

195. and the choices we make. Whether or not we stand up for our freedoms.
Whether or not we
196. respect and enforce the rule of law. America is no fragile thing. But the gains
of our long
197. journey to freedom are not assured. In his own farewell address, George
Washington wrote that
198. self-government is the underpinning of our safety, prosperity, and liberty,
but “from different
199. causes and from different quarters much pains will be taken...to weaken in
your minds the
200. conviction of this truth;” that we should preserve it with “jealous anxiety;”
that we should reject
201. **“the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country
from the**
202. **rest[*ppp*] or to enfeeble the sacred ties” that make us one[*ppp*]. We weaken
those ties when**
203. **we allow our political dialogue to become so corrosive[*ppp*] that people of
good character are**
204. turned off from public service; so coarse with rancor that Americans with
whom we disagree are
205. not just misguided, but somehow malevolent. We weaken those ties **when
we define some of us**
206. **as more American than others[*ppp*]; when we write off the whole system
as inevitably**
207. **corrupt, and blame the leaders we elect without examining our own role
in electing**
208. **them[*ppp*]. It falls to each of us to be those anxious, jealous guardians of our**
209. **democracy[*ppp*]; to embrace the joyous task we’ve been given to continually
try to improve**
210. **this great nation of ours[*ppp*].** Because for all our outward differences, we
all share the same
211. proud title: Citizen. Some of you here tonight or watching at home were there
with us in 2004, in
212. 2008, in 2012 – and maybe you still can’t believe we pulled this whole thing
off. Ultimately,
213. that’s what our democracy demands. It needs you. Not just when there’s an
election, not just
214. when your own narrow interest is at stake, but over the full span of a lifetime.
If you’re tired of

215. arguing with strangers on the internet, try to talk with one in real life. If something needs fixing,
216. lace up your shoes and do some organizing. If you're disappointed by your elected officials,
217. grab a clipboard, get some signatures, and run for office yourself. Show up. Dive
218. in. Persevere. Sometimes you'll win. Sometimes you'll lose. Presuming a reservoir of
219. goodness in others can be a risk, and there will be times when the process disappoints you. But
220. for those of us fortunate enough to have been a part of this work, to see it up close, let me tell
221. you, it can energize and inspire. And more often than not, **your faith in America – and in**
222. **Americans**[*ppp*]- will be confirmed. [n. characters – 20.173]

As already said, for the sake of brevity, I will only show half of the computation charts for the two speeches, which report the calculations carried out to yield the global implicitness index of each speech. The computation charts contains the following columns.

- **Column A** (*Line*) indicates the line(s) of the text from which the implicit content has been extracted.
- **Column B** (*Text*) displays the text string containing the relevant implicit strategies.
- **Column C** (*instantiated category*) classifies, through an abbreviation, the category of implicit communication instantiated in the selected text string.
- **Column D** (*length – in characters*) reports the number of characters making up the implicit content, i.e. how much space it occupies in the text.
- **Column E** (*Length respons.*) indicates the length of the string limited to implicitness of responsibility.
- **Column F** (*Implicitness Index – ImpIn*) shows the index of responsibility implicitness assigned to the strategy instantiated in the string.
- **Column G** (*Length x ImpIn*) presents the value stemming from the product of Column E and the implicitness index reported in Column F. This value indicates the overall responsibility implicitness impact of the text string.
- **Column I** (*Length content*) reports the length of the string limited to cases of responsibility of content.
- **Column J** (*Implicitness index – ImpIn*) shows the index of content implicitness attributed to the instantiated category.

- **Column K** (*Length x ImpIn*) presents the value resulting from the product of Column I and Column J. This value indicates the overall content implicitness impact of the text string.
- **Column L** (*Global implicitness*) contains values resulting from the sum of Columns G and K and indicates the contribution of each utterance or string of text conveying implicit meaning to the overall implicitness (affecting both the responsibility and content level) of the whole speech.
- **Column M** (*Total length of the whole speech*) reports the total number of characters of the entire speech, which serves as common denominator to calculate the length of each annotated text string.

The computation of the global implicitness degree of a text is performed through the following steps. First of all, the length of the text, in terms of number of characters has to be calculated. This allows establishing how much space each string containing an implicit strategy occupies in the text as a whole. The extension (in characters) of the single string is then divided by the total number of characters. So, if in a text of 10.000 characters a string is 1.000 characters long, the space it occupies is 10% (0.1) of the text. This measured length is then multiplied for the index assigned to it in the systems of indexes shown in Table 8. So, if the string contains a focal presupposition, 0,1 will be multiplied for 4, which gives 0,4. This resulting value represents the overall *implicitating impact* of that string on the total speech. The sum of all such performed computations will finally return a global implicitness index roughly indicating how implicit and tendentious a text is. This global index, taken individually, is clearly only partially suggestive of the degree to which a politician uses implicit strategies in her speech, yet it becomes definitely more telling when compared to indexes obtained from other speeches.

An important terminological distinction to heed is the one between *length* (or extension) and *impact*. While the former value is yielded by the ratio between the number of characters of the string and that of the whole text, the latter is a weighted value reflecting how impacting (i.e. intense in degree) the implicitness of a string is; and this value can only be obtained multiplying its extension for the implicitness index associated to the type of strategy exploited.

Table Y shows half of the computation performed for Hillary Clinton's speech, while Table Z shows the one carried out for Barack Obama.

Table 9. Computation chart of Hillary Clinton's speech

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	I	J	K	L	M
Lint	Text	Instantiated category	length (in characters)	Length (respons.)	Implicitness index (ImpIn)	Length x ImpIn	Length (content)	implicitness index (ImpIn)	Length x ImpIn	Global implicitness	Total length (of the whole text)
lines 7-8	<i>to be out of the woods and in the company of so many inspiring women</i>	ppp-top	68	0.003858375	7	0.027008625				0.027008625	17624
line 14	<i>her visionary leader ship</i>	ppp	24	0.001361779	4	0.005447118				0.005447118	17624
lines 23-25	<i>the woman who stands up and says not just for her self but for everybody else, "we want diversity and inclusion in everything we do in our country"</i>	vag	146				0.008284158	3	0.024852474	0.024852474	17624
line 26	<i>the right thing to do</i>	top	21	0.001191557	3	0.003574671				0.003574671	17624
lines 31-32	<i>the great unfinished business of the 21st century</i>	ppp	49	0.0027803	4	0.01121198				0.01121198	17624
line 33	<i>while we women have made strides in education and careers</i>	ppp+top	57	0.003234226	7	0.022639582				0.022639582	17624
lines 34-35	<i>there's still a woeful the upper reaches of science and technology business and education</i>	ppp	108	0.006128007	4	0.024512029				0.024512029	17624
lines 36-37	<i>the lowest it's: been in a generation</i>	ppp	36	0.002042669	4	0.008170676				0.008170676	17624
lines 44-45	<i>a lot better than it currently is</i>	ppp	33	0.001872	4	0.007489787				0.007489787	17624
lines 46-47	<i>women are no longer required to accept or adapt to discrimination or sexism at work</i>	ppp	83	0.004709	4	0.018837948				0.018837948	17624
...
				Global length-responsibility		Implicitness impact responsibility	Global length-content		Implicitness impact content	Global implicitness of the speech	
Totals				0,12		0,62	0,05		0,15	0,77	

Table 10. Computation chart of Barack Obama's speech

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	I	J	K	L	M
Line	Text	Instantiated category	Length (in characters)	Length (respons.)	Implicitness index (impln)	Length x Impln	Length (content)	Implicitness index (impln)	Length x Impln	Global Implicitness	Total length (of the whole text)
line 5	<i>what have kept me honest, kept me inspired and kept me going</i>	ppp	61	0.003023844	4	0.012095375				0.012095375	20173
lines 10–11	<i>the quiet dignity of working people in the face of struggle and loss</i>	ppp	68	0.003370842	4	0.013483369				0.013483369	20173
line 11	<i>change</i>	top	6	0.000297427	3	0.000892282				0.000892282	20173
lines 11–13	<i>when ordinary people get involved. get engaged and come together to demand it</i>	vag	78				0.003866554	3	0.011599663	0.011599663	20173
lines 13–14	<i>the beating heart of an American idea</i>	ppp	38	0.001883706	4	0.007534824				0.007534824	20173
line 14	<i>our bold experiment in self-government</i>	ppp	38	0.001883706	4	0.007534824				0.007534824	20173
lines 14–16	<i>the conviction that we are all created endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness</i>	ppp	156	0.007733109	4	0.030932434				0.030932434	20173
line 18	<i>the great gift our Founders gave us</i>	ppp	35	0.001734992	4	0.006939969				0.006939969	20173
line 19	<i>The freedom to chase our individual dreams through our sweat, toil and imagination</i>	ppp	83	0.004114	4	0.016457641				0.016457641	20173
line 20	<i>the imperative to strive together as well, to achieve a greater good</i>	ppp	68	0.003371	4	0.013483369				0.013483369	20173
line 21	<i>our nation's call to citizenship</i>	ppp	32	0.001586	4	0.006345115				0.006345115	20173
...
				Global length responsibility		Implicitness impact responsibility	Global length-content		Implicitness impact content	Global implicitness of the speech	
Totals				0,18		0,78	0,01		0,03	0,81	

Looking at the Global Implicitness Indexes displayed at the right bottom of each chart, it appears that Obama's speech (0,81) is 4% more implicit than Clinton's speech (0,77).¹² In both speeches, strategies of responsibility implicitness are far more diffuse than strategies of content implicitness. On the whole, presupposition seems to be the most widespread discourse device in both texts. Other applications of this computation system (e.g. see the works by Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2016a, 2016b on Italian political speeches, and, in general, the annotations available on the OPPP! website) confirm a more massive exploitation of presuppositional strategies over other strategies to achieve persuasive aims.

6.3.2 More on the OPPP! website

It is worth highlighting that the purpose of the OPPP! website is not only to show annotated speeches with explicitation comments, but also to post values of the overall impact of implicit communication on a speech calculated according to the procedure expounded in the previous section (cf. Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014). Instead of skimming through the data from the computation chart, we thought that an interested lay reader might be more willing to visualize global implicitness indexes of the compared texts. These two values thus appear graphicated in the form of coloured histograms, as shown in Figure 18.

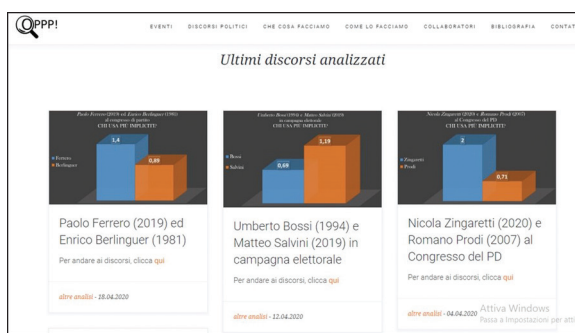


Figure 18. Comparisons of global implicitness values from both synchronic and diachronic analyses

Sometimes, when the values of a single politician's speech are posted, we may opt for comparing the values obtained from the strategies of responsibility implicitness and those gleaned from strategies of content implicitness. However, this is data

12. These values obviously result from computations on the total length of the speech, although only a small part of all implicit strategies used are displayed in the charts, as indicated by the ellipsis sign at the bottom of each chart.

which entails that the difference between these two levels of implicitness is properly understood; hence, we more rarely make it available to the general public.

The Global Implicitness Index is placed on top of each column of the histogram. The higher the column, the more implicit the text. Comparisons between speeches sometimes involve contemporary speeches held by politicians belonging to conflicting parties (what we call *synchronic comparison*) or speeches held by two political exponents of the same party in different time periods (*diachronic comparison*). The first picture in the screenshot reports the comparison between two leaders of the Italian Communist Party, one who held his speech in 1981 (Enrico Berlinguer), the other more recently (Paolo Ferrero). The second comparison likens the speeches held by two leaders of the populist League party, Matteo Salvini (2019) and Umberto Bossi (1994), while in the third picture a comparison of two leaders of the Democratic Party (Nicola Zingaretti and Romano Prodi) is shown. These diachronic comparisons prove to be particularly revealing of the transformation that political discourse has undergone over the years. As a matter of fact, from a very cursory look, it seems that more contemporary politicians are likely to use more implicit strategies in their speeches than older politicians. More data are of course necessary to either confirm this trend or revise it, but this line of research, which is another relevant task of the IMPAQT'S project, will no doubt seek to provide a valid contribution in this sense.

From the posted data (which appear as active links), the user can access the full speeches by clicking on the picture. In this way, not only will she be able to read the full texts but will also visualize the comments explaining each implicit content annotated, as shown in Figure 19.

Discorso di Matteo Salvini a Milano, il 18 maggio 2019, per la chiusura della campagna elettorale della Lega per le elezioni europee.

Link al video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkqjthoryGk>.

- 1 Innanzitutto grazie.
- 2 E fatemi dire che questa è una giornata eccezionale.
- 3 E vi dico grazie per essere qua a cambiare la storia insieme a noi.
- 4 Ragazzi non voglio nessuno, ok?
- 5 Una risposta, e poi parleremo di vita, di futuro, di speranza.
- 6 In questa piazza c'è gente che ama, in questa piazza c'è gente che rispetta.
- 7 A Milano oggi c'è gente che vive con passione, che non si rassegna a un futuro di povertà, di precarietà, di paura e di schiavitù.
- 8 Come, come diceva Gilbert Chesterton - e questo Pio pensò stanotte, quando mi sono addormentato a casa abbracciato a mia figlia di sei anni, pensando che quello che sto e che stiamo facendo non lo stiamo facendo per noi, ma lo stiamo facendo per i nostri figli e le nostre figlie - e questo Chesterton scriveva che il vero soldato combatte non perché odia ciò che c'è di fronte a lui, ma perché ama ciò che c'è dietro di lui.
- 9 E noi amiamo la nostra terra, amiamo i nostri figli, amiamo i nostri valori, amiamo le Madonnine che ci protegge dall'alto e ci accompagna e ci accompagnerà.
- 10 In questa Piazza non ci sono estremisti, non ci sono razzisti, non ci sono fascisti.

Figure 19. Excerpt of a speech as it appears on the OPPP! website

Due to its intent to make political speeches readable and fully interpretable, the website also contains a section (Figure 20) where the four strategies of implicit communication are outlined and adequately illustrated. This is the educational aim of the website as well as its reader-oriented purpose.



Figure 20. Explanatory section of the OPPI! website

For those interested in gaining more insights into implicit communication and its linguistic phenomena, a well-reasoned list of related publications arranged by subject can also be found. Although the notions of presupposition, implicature, topic and vagueness considered for the annotation work comply with specific theoretical frameworks (e.g. Stalnaker 1974 for presuppositions, Grice 1975 for implicatures, Cresti 2000 for Topic and Machetti 2011 for vagueness), the list covers a wider range of perspectives on these discourse phenomena so as to constitute a possible repository of relevant publications on the subject.

6.3.3 Educating to a “culture of implicitness”

As for the Polish-Italian pilot study described in Section 6.2.3, also the works at the basis of the IMPAQTS and OPPI! projects are driven by the strength of their educational aims. As Sbisà (2007) rightfully pointed out, it is of paramount importance to educate people of any age to effectively deal with implicit communication in a text. In fact, she notes, if implicit contents are not properly explained, they can “dodge the receiver’s direct cognitive control” as well as her logical-argumentative control of the text as a whole. In this way, a text risks to be received somewhat uncritically and with little conception of its more or less debatable contents. The worst effect of this situation is that the reader may be found in a disadvantaged condition in that she will not have access to all contents of a text the same way an expert and more attentive reader can do. This especially holds for those implicit meanings which are more distant from the surface text both on the formal and the content level. Sbisà (2007) pinpoints five crucial skills that are deemed indispensable to be able to detect implicit contents. These are

- linguistic competences*, that is the capability of disentangling the syntactic structure of the text, as well as understanding the meaning of the words in a sentence;
- textual competences*, involving the understanding of inter-phrasal relationships as well as of thematic relations between non-contiguous sentence units;

- c. *logical-argumentative competences*, namely the logical consequences deriving from using implicit strategies in a text;
- d. *cooperational competences*, assumptions on the cooperative attitude of the author, which is an essential requirement to calculate conversational implicatures. Added to this, a decisive role is also played by the ability to pin down the author's subjectivity (Sbisà 2007: 179), which entails attributing mental states, emotions, thoughts, intentions, and so on;
- e. *monitoring of one's own use of implicit communication*, involving the development and management of some metalinguistic and metacognitive reflection on the use of implicit strategies.

With respect to (e), it is well known that people affected by neurological and developmental pathologies like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or the Asperger syndrome may have impaired pragmatic competences, especially those related to the computation of implied meanings (Baixauli et al. 2017; Lewis et al. 2008). Some studies (Bloom 2000; Surian & Siegal 2008) have highlighted that people with ASD find it more difficult to move from the literal meaning of a message to its non-literal meaning, and so they hardly get to understand the hidden communicative intention of the speaker.¹³ At the basis of this hindrance is the lack of a Theory of Mind (ToM) ability, that is, the capability of attributing mental states to other people and, accordingly, to evaluate the cause and consequences of their actions (Nichols & Stich 2003; Frith & Frith 2005). As it can be easily deduced, an underdeveloped ToM capacity may thus even compromise a correct development and use of cooperational competences in conversation, which means that autistic people fail to grasp the cooperative attitude of a speaker when even apparent violations of gricean maxims are at play. The implications for the understanding of implicit language on the part of people affected by such impairments are non negligible. As a matter of fact, how would it be possible for people with impaired pragmatic linguistic skills to properly understand a text containing implicit communicative intentions? Access to such hidden intentions would in fact be hampered by an underdeveloped (or non-developed at all) ToM capacity. This means that for people reporting this type of impairment, a political speech or an advertising slogan would end up being even more manipulative than for people with no such problems. It would be interesting to assess whether a training program such as the one described in Section 6.3 might improve the capacity of people with underdeveloped ToM to

13. Studies are not always convergent on this general assumption (Pijnaker et al. 2009; Schaeken et al. 2018; Cerezuela et al. 2018) since, in some cases, autistic patients have shown to have selective pragmatic deficits, in that they seem to perform better in some pragmatic tasks and worse in others.

detect implicit discourse strategies and become able to nail down the implicit content they carry. No experimental inquiry has ever been undertaken so far in this respect, but I strongly believe that it would inaugurate a crucial and necessary line of investigation within current quantitative approaches to implicit communication and its manipulative consequences in language processing.

The experimental evidence discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the results of the Italian-Polish Twitter pilot study presented before, corroborates the view that when we come across implicit discourse strategies in a text, the most immediate and less (cognitively) costly effect is to comply with them. If this is often true for many expert readers, it becomes even more true for those with scarce metalinguistic knowledge on implicit language. The question is, besides having a rather consolidated status in linguistic theory, implicit communication also has a cognitive reality, in that it controls our mind in different and not always predictable ways. In the main, the ability to explicitate implicit contents has, above all, practical purposes and, notably, the aim to make a text more effectively usable to optimize the information contained in it, and thus evaluate its content with greater critical detachment. So, research on implicit communication – whether conducted in a pedagogical perspective or with more practical socially-oriented priorities – should not neglect the importance of building what Sbisà (2007) called a “culture of implicitness” (*cultura dell’implicito*), by which she means

a set of attitudes and practices aimed at optimizing the acquisition of information from texts, either with a view to adding information about the world to the one explicitly coded, and in the direction of a more complete reconstruction of the author/speaker’s inner world. (Sbisà 2007: 199)¹⁴

She further points out that this “culture” has to become an intellectual endowment of all citizens in a society and in a world in which democratic rights are constantly endangered by communication methods which are often subtly treacherous and difficult to deal with. A sense of belonging to a community cannot be profoundly experienced if the interactions between its members are not all the way understood. Put otherwise, we can live as full citizens only if we can properly master the language that regulates our interactions and the expression of our communicative intentions.

14. “[...] un insieme di atteggiamenti e di pratiche volto a ottimizzare l’acquisizione di informazioni dai testi, sia nella direzione di aggiungere altre informazioni sul mondo a quelle esplicitamente formulate, sia nella direzione di una ricostruzione più completa del mondo interiore del parlante o autore.”

6.4 Implicit communication as a way to distinguish between different text types

A further non-negligible aspect of teaching to deal with implicit communication also concerns the capability of differentiating between text types. It stands to reason that all texts contain a certain amount of implicit strategies since, as argued in Chapter 1, they also serve purposes other than just manipulating. Yet, when implicit communication involves non-objective and potentially more challengeable types of contents (e.g. attacks, critics, praise, etc., cf. Chapter 4), it can “flag” a text as more manipulative and persuasive than others. Indeed, only some types of texts are usually conceived to have a persuasive intent and, for that very reason, they happen to have a greater amount of non-neutral (or, as said earlier in this chapter, non *bona fide* true) implicit contents than other texts with weaker persuasive goals.

The data I would like to discuss in the remainder of this section come from a recent study (Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2020) in which we probed the extension of implicit communication in different types of texts with a view to assessing the degree to which implicitness can be regarded as a parameter to classify text genres and their functions.

6.4.1 The corpus and the method

For the study, we used a corpus of written and oral texts which, together, amounted to 841.609 characters. Oral texts included political speeches, television journalism and university lectures. Written texts were mainly represented by holiday catalogues, articles of political journalism, news (non political articles), instruction manuals and political programs. As it can be deduced, all these texts can be distributed on a persuasiveness gradient (Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2020: 115), where some text types are expected to be characterized by a higher persuasiveness degree (e.g. political speeches, political programs and holiday catalogues), while other text genres are more likely to show a weaker persuasive strength (e.g. news, instruction manuals and university lectures). The research aimed at probing the interaction between the persuasive goal of a text and its likelihood of containing strategies of implicit communication. Complying with the same *bona fide* parameter described for the IMPAQTS project in Section 6.4, all potentially challengeable presuppositions, implicatures, topicalizations and vague expressions have been annotated in the texts. We moved from the hypothesis that the more significant the interaction between text type and persuasiveness degree, the greater the extent to which implicit communication can be regarded as a further parameter for classifying texts.

Building on the measurement methodology proposed in Lombardi Vallauri & Masia (2014) and clarified in the previous section, after annotating all texts, we computed the extension (in characters) of the strings containing implicit strategies. The resulting value was then divided by the total number of characters composing the whole text. The “extension index” yielded by this ratio indicates the overall textual length occupied by non *bona fide* true contents in the text. Let us take a text of 20.000 characters as an illustration. If all implicit contents in it totalize 6.000 characters of the entire text, this means that almost 30% of the linguistic material of the text is devoted to conveying non bona fide true meanings in an implicit, and thus manipulative way.

6.4.2 Results and discussion

In Figure 21, I report a resumptive pie chart of the results gleaned from the analysis (adapted from Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2020).

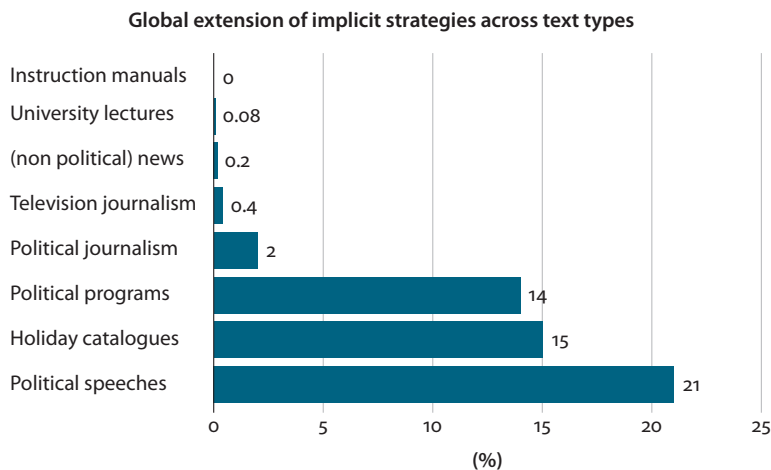


Figure 21. Global extension of challengeable implicit contents in the corpus

As a *prima facie* observation, the higher extension indexes (expressed as percentage values) are exhibited by political speeches, holiday catalogues and political programs. Due to their goals and functions, the use of implicit communicative devices is predictably more significant, as also shown in the previous chapter. Interestingly, political journalism reports a higher index than the other types of journalistic texts. These data are quite interesting in that, although political journalism and news journalism originate in identical diamesic and diaphasic conditions (Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2020: 117), they visibly differ in the use level of implicit strategies in a way

that seems to be contingent on the type and nature of the contents conveyed. In other words, it seems that the more political the contents conveyed in a text, the more likely they will be packaged in an implicit way. However, the use of implicit communication in political journalism is far more limited than in propagandistic texts, because journalism also has an informative and popular intent, contrary to the enthralling and conditioning intent of political propaganda, in all its aspects. The text types with the lowest extension indexes are those displayed by university lectures and instruction manuals. This trend is in line with the pre-eminently didactic and educational function of these text types, whose main purpose is not only to impart knowledge, but also to do that in a way that makes recipients aware of the contents learned, which explains why explicit strategies are far more diffuse than implicit ones. Taking a closer look at the single strategies, it emerged that presupposition is the most widespread one across text types (37% of the entire corpus), followed by topicalization (15%), implicature (12%) and vagueness (2,3%). In a diamesic perspective, then, presupposition proves to be the most widespread discursive phenomenon in increasingly more persuasive types of texts. This can by and large be put down to the greater persuasive efficiency of the strategies conveying implicitness of responsibility, as we also expressed through the implicitness indexes in Table 8. Differently than implicatures and vagueness which, as argued before, conceal the main content of a message (implicitness of content), presuppositions hide the speaker's responsibility to truth, which prevents the recipient from completely reconstructing the actual source of information.

At the beginning of this section, I suggested to view the different text types constituting the corpus as distributed along a *persuasiveness scale* and we expected that the higher the percentage of implicit strategies in a text, the higher the position of that text in the persuasive scale. The percentages yielded by the analysis suggest the following categorization of text types.

Political speeches	Holiday catalogues	Political programs	Political journalism	Television journalism	News journalism	University lectures	Instruction manuals
--------------------	--------------------	--------------------	----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	---------------------	---------------------

+ PERSUASIVE

– PERSUASIVE

The [+ PERSUASIVE] trait corresponds to a higher presence of non bona fide true implicit contents, while [– PERSUASIVE] is indicative of a smaller amount of implicit strategies of this kind.

6.4.3 Further remarks

It must be pointed up that the corpus used for the analysis mainly comes from Italian texts; yet a comparison between text types on a cross-linguistic basis may certainly provide a more solid grounding to further appraise the working hypotheses set out in the present study. In any case, being able to use the “implicitness” parameter to discern between text genres helps the recipient experiment with the necessary approach to interpret the text without running the risk of losing a great bulk of its main content. Correspondingly, the recipient will understand that when implicit communication is used in an instruction manual, it is because it chiefly serves cohesive and possibly anaphorical functions, given that most of the implicit contents in these text types have already been introduced in an assertive way earlier in the text. But when it comes to political discourse or holiday catalogues, the use of implicit strategies entail a persuasive intent, and this often involves contents which are not bona fide true. The recipient should therefore take on a more epistemically vigilant (Sperber et al. 2010) attitude towards these text types and be ready to properly reconstruct the content that has been subtracted from the text surface. Needless to say, this capability goes hand in hand with the ability to pin down the linguistic features of implicit communication, which is why a training on how presupposition, implicature, topicalization and vagueness work could not neglect relevant illustrations of the diamesic contexts and textual categories (both oral and written) in which they usually occur.

Conclusion

“Persuadere implica che la persona sia libera non solo di volere, di agire, ma anche di pensare, di credere, di decidere. Dev’essere, insomma, libera di lasciarsi persuadere.”

[To persuade involves that a person is free not only to want or act, but also to think, believe and choose.

All in all, she has to be free to be persuaded]

– Massimo Piattelli Palmarini, *L’arte di persuadere*

At this point in our journey, a number of questions still remain pending. Some of these concern the following,

- What other aspects of implicit communication may become manipulative in given contexts?
- Can also explicit communication be manipulative? If yes, how?
- Is manipulation always harmful for the addressee, or is it tolerable for given interactional purposes?
- How can we become more honest and transparent communicators, yet keeping on being effective ones?
- And so on and so forth...

Addressing all these questions would have led far beyond the scope of this volume; but I also believe that for some of them, more than one answer is available. Indeed, based on the pragmatic framework adopted and on the interpretation of the discourse phenomena tackled in this book, the relation between implicit language and manipulative communicative processes may be recast in many other ways. For instance, some recent contention revolved around assessing which strategies of discourse should be regarded as more manipulative than others. From certain perspectives, implicatures have been laid out as more manipulative because they appear as more implicit and less available on the surface text. Other viewpoints (e.g. Lombardi Vallauri & Masia 2014) see presuppositions as endowed with a stronger manipulative power because they affect the speaker’s epistemic responsibility which, if strategically reduced or weakened, is likely to become less addressable. Whether concealment of a speaker’s intentional meaning or of her responsibility to truth should be considered more manipulative and/or more

implicit is still object of vivid debates, and this volume obviously does not want to provide a conclusive answer in this respect. This book is instead intended to contribute to the current debate with a cross-cutting reflection on some important domains of language use where recourse to implicit communication may hide insidious manipulative threats.

In Chapter 1, I have sought to trace the features and functions of implicitness in verbal communication and how it can become manipulative in given contexts. Some reflection has been dedicated to what I consider a crucial distinction in the attempt to understand the manipulative power of implicit communication, that is, the distinction between content commitment (i.e. the speaker's epistemic commitment to the truth of some information) and discourse commitment (e.g. commitment degree displayed by the speaker in conversation). We have seen that manipulative processes more relevantly hinge on what commitment the speaker *manifests* through the use of certain discourse strategies, rather than on what she actually believes as true. So, in manipulative contexts, the impression we give to our addressee on our degree of commitment to the contents negotiated in an interaction gains greater importance than the contents we actually believe to be true.

In Chapter 2, I wanted to add some empirical grounding to these preliminaries discussing findings from corpus-based studies on implicit language in different text genres (i.e. traditional political speeches and social network sites) as well as data from behavioral and neurophysiological experimentations on presupposition, implicature, topicalization, with some much scater evidence on vagueness.

A third, rather novel, approach to inquiring the manipulative power of implicit communication has been identified in the way it modulates evidential meanings and, notably, the speaker's sourceness and epistemic attitude to the truth of some information (Chapter 3). We have seen that much of what affects the challengeability of some contents resides in how openly and directly the speaker manifests herself as committed source of a proposition. In this respect, I have put forward the hypothesis that assertion pragmatically conveys a meaning of direct evidentiality, because in asserting a proposition the speaker commits to providing adequate evidence for its truth (Searle 1969). Conversely, I have suggested to view presupposition and topic as pragmatic strategies encoding mutual evidentiality (Hintz & Hintz 2017), because they package some knowledge as already holding in the common ground of both speaker and receiver. Implicature and vagueness parallel assertion in conveying meaning to be attributed to the speaker's source, yet, differently from an assertive speech act, implicatures and vague expressions require the receiver to reconstruct the speaker's meaning by inferential calculation, which is why I proposed to define both strategies as pragmatic markers of a more attenuated direct evidentiality.

In Chapter 4, I proposed an inquiry on the use of presupposition in Italian news discourse and how it may impinge upon the comprehension of different content types. The data discussed in this chapter show that, in some newspapers, blasting or evaluative contents are often packaged as presuppositions by journalists, which means that their truth is tacitly taken for granted rather than overtly submitted to the critical evaluation of the reader. Depending on the content to which they are associated, presuppositions may bias the comprehension of a newspaper article, because they can induce the receiver to accept as true contents whose veracity she could not sound properly.

In Chapter 5, the potential manipulative effects of interlinguistic translation have been tackled with particular regard to the translation and/or interpretation of topicalizations, presuppositions, implicatures and vague expressions. Contrary to what other lines of thought (Sanatifar 2016) have suggested, I argued that opting for explicitation strategies is a safe choice only if the content to be explicitated is what the original author uniquely intended. When this is not the case – that is, when the translator cannot have access to the implicit speaker's meaning – she should not make tentative guesses risking to fail to properly render the communicative effect of the source text.

Chapter 6 focused on some ongoing projects aimed at enhancing people's awareness on the use and interpretation of implicit communication. It described the objectives of a pilot study aimed at testing the effects of teaching how to deal with implicit language on Twitter and whether a training program can be devised to make students learn to detect different strategies of implicit communication and the functions they serve in a text. Also, the main working lines of the IMPAQTS project have been outlined which aimed at gathering a huge corpus of Italian political speeches all annotated for the relevant categories of implicit communication. We have also seen how this part of the project gains strength from other dissemination activities involving the spread of advancements on the research on implicit communication, as well as analyses of pairs of political speeches on a dedicated website (OPPP!). This chapter of the volume puts forth more prospective approaches to the study of implicit communication and its manipulative uses, as exemplified in the preceding chapters as well as in numerous other contexts. My wish is that the steps taken in the direction of making the study and comprehension of implicit language may become a common benchmark of everybody's cultural endowment since it is at the very basis of the democratic societies we live in.

The manipulative implications discussed for the four phenomena of implicit communication dealt with in this volume also pose interesting questions inhering in the newly emerging field of neuromarketing (Renvoisé & Morin 2007; Zurawicki 2010). Neuromarketing conducts research dedicated to investigating

the neurological factors inducing a person to buy a product. From some standpoints, this line of research has been regarded as less ethical because it reveals what brain regions are responsible for regulating a buyer's choice and thus suggests how a slogan should be created in order to stimulate those regions and persuade an individual to buy a product. My purpose in this book is not to contribute to this line of investigation with further tips on how to build a more persuasive slogan. Instead, the argumentations I put forward more strongly side with the manipulated addressee, rather than with the manipulator him/herself. In fact, although manipulation is usually believed to be intentional, it may well be the case that a communicator ends up using manipulative linguistic strategies without having the intention to perpetrate any manipulation whatsoever. Yet, since distinguishing between intentional and non-intentional manipulation is not always possible, it is advisable that the addressee is always able to exert some vigilance on any manipulative text she comes across. For this reason, my perspective in this volume was to endow the interested reader with some useful analysis tools to ask herself questions on why she makes the choices she makes and, even more importantly, ask herself how much of the convictions and beliefs she holds stems from her free choice of espousing certain ideas or not, or from how *language* has changed her perspective. Because language appears as the most natural and automatic capacity at the basis of our interpersonal interactions, we are often likely to neglect, or take for granted, how manipulative it can be in some contexts. That is why becoming aware of how manipulative language works and what discursive ploys it relies on is among our unalienable rights as individuals and as citizens. Manipulative communication entails in itself an imbalance of power between the manipulator and the manipulated addressee and it is, for this very reason, a violation to the right of knowledge. And lack of proper metalinguistic knowledge is a weakness which a manipulator tries to detect and exploit using language strategies that risk to be extremely harmful for us. Once this weakness is subject to exploitation, it can be used against our will and power of choice, which is in turn driven towards fulfilling the manipulator's intention and, correspondingly, giving up something of ourselves. Then, when we finally get manipulated, it is the manipulator, and not us, who is in charge of our life. Learning how to master the traps of manipulative language, of which implicit communication is only one of the manifold manifestations, therefore gives us the ability to place ourselves in a position where we can safely protect our right to know as well as our dignity as citizens living in an informed democratic society.

The title I have chosen for this book hints at two main strands of discussion. One strand aimed at elucidating some of the most common *tricks* of implicit and manipulative communication, namely the linguistic strategies which it relies on.

Another strand was targeted at delving into the potential manipulative *threats* of using implicit communication. For the sake of clarity, I would like to summarize the main points of these discussions in the following lines.

In verbal communication, manipulation may take advantage of

- a. ...*the covertness nature of some information*. If you want to persuade someone about some content or idea, do not make that idea too explicit in the text.
- b. ...*the attentional biases induced by some implicit strategies*. If you want to persuade your addressee about some content or idea, try reduce her attention on it so that she will feel less urged to put it into discussion.
- c. ...*the cooperational assumptions forming the common ground of the conversation*. If you want to convince your addressee without publicly endorsing the truth of a proposition, hide your communicative intention behind another literal message.
- d. ...*the modulation of sourcedness and commitment attribution*. If you do not want to be challenged by the receiver, make the receiver a co-source of the content you want to convince her about. In this way, the receiver will be less bound to address content also holding in her epistemic domain.

As we have seen throughout the book, all these advantages correlate with the use of specific discourse strategies. For example, presupposition and topic are relevant manifestations of the strategies in (b) and (d), while implicature and vagueness may well serve the purpose of the strategy in (c).

On the recipient's side, awareness of the following threats should not be missing:

1. When we do not know or are not aware of the manipulative intent hidden behind the use of certain linguistic strategies, we simply *fail to critically evaluate the meaning of a message*.
2. While not controlling how manipulation « twists our vision of the world », we unconsciously happen to generate mental models *irreversibly influencing our behaviors and choices in everyday life*.
3. In commercial propaganda, we may end up being convinced of a product's qualities without even having had the chance to *gauge its potentially (and, in many cases, real) negative features*.
4. By the same token, in political propaganda, we may become believers and supporters of ideologies with *little or no awareness of the dangerous premises they are grounded in*.
5. When the receiver does not know how language can manipulate her mind, she is simply *incapable of defending herself* from deceptive contents that might condition her vision of the world.

If we think about the large-scale impact that the use of manipulative discourse devices might have on citizens' lives, on their choices and on how they can in turn influence other cohabitants of their communities, keeping our mind awake and adequately trained to grasp both the "unearthed" and the "drowned" contents of a text is becoming an always more compelling concern of contemporary societies. And, in a society and in a world where democracy is increasingly exposed to the emergence of dangerous ideologies that deteriorate its stability, we have to become "hunters" of contents often reaching our mind only subliminally. This will help us prevent manipulative communicative moves from guiding and redetermining our reasoning activity in dangerous and harmful ways for us. As remarked by Piattelli Palmarini (1995: 40), persuasion [and not manipulation] should be the only way to make others change their opinions and desires, because this is the only way to make them aware of what they are being convinced about and of what aspects of the persuasive process are relevant to their role in an interaction.

My greatest desire is that both the offshoots of the research work and the topics touched upon in this volume might contribute to hone and further empower people's ability to detect *the manipulative disguise of truth* in human communication.

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Becoming effective hunters of manipulative communicative moves is far from an easy capacity to develop. This book aims at offering a guide to the most dangerous traps of deceptive language as triggered by implicit communication strategies such as presupposition, implicature, topicalization and vague expressions. A look at different contexts of language use highlights some of the most remarkable implications of using indirect speech and of how it affects the correct comprehension of a message. Within the remit of communication and pragmatics studies, this work marks an advancement in the direction of delving into the linguistic manifestations of manipulative discourse, its most common contexts of use and the educational paths that can be undertaken to master it in everyday interactions.

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