Eddo Rigotti & Andrea Rocci*

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION CONTEXT.
FOUNDATIONS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION.

The paper addresses the notion of communication context as a key for understanding communication sciences as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry.

A semantic analysis of the word *context* allows us to grasp the double relationship between the *context* and the *contextualized*: the *context* sets the constitutive conditions of the contextualised and at the same time the context is affected (changed) by the contextualized. From the language sciences it emerges a twofold view of *communication context* as having both an *interpretive* and a *constitutive* dimension.

Constitutive context becomes relevant at the level of the speech act in its double role of defining the conditions of meaningfulness of the speech act and constituting the target on which the speech act operates effecting a change in the intersubjective reality. At this level communication context is eminently a social notion.

To account for the dynamic functioning of communication context at the speech-act level we propose a model that distinguishes between an *institutionalised* component and an *interpersonal* one. Within the institutionalized component, *activity types* are seen as resulting from the mapping of culturally shared *interaction schemes* onto an actual *interaction field* (a social reality characterized by shared goals and mutual commitments). As a result of the mapping, communicative flows and roles are created. Within the *interpersonal* dimension, we distinguish between a relationship-based *personal* component and a *communal* component connected with cultural identities.

The proposed model of context can be used as a means of integrating the disciplines focussing on message structure and communication processes with disciplines that tackle particular socially relevant contexts.

Keywords: context, communication (interdisciplinary approach to), interpretive context, constitutive context, semantic analysis, pragmatics, speech acts, interpersonal context, institutional context, linguistics.

* University of Lugano, eddo.rigotti@lu.unisi.ch; andrea.rocci@lu.unisi.ch

1. Levering with context to solve complexity

It seems rather uncontroversial to say that since communication is a complex object, it could not be investigated in a merely mono-disciplinary perspective[1] without neglecting essential aspects of it[2]. The only possible alternatives are either a *multi*-disciplinary approach or an *inter*-disciplinary one.

The former approach, which is often applied, offers an interesting aggregate of different points of view. However, such an approach does not develop a coherent epistemological endeavour. It presents a thoroughly juxtapositional structure where a battery of different discourses do not properly benefit from the opportunity of their mutual dialogue.

The latter – interdisciplinary – approach, aims, on the contrary, at building up and realising an epistemological design, ideally corresponding to the deep nature of the object. In such a design the various disciplines involved are epistemologically connected so that each of them acknowledges the interdisciplinary construction as its own development and is aware of the fact that the contributions given by the related disciplines are relevant and strictly complementary to its own.

This article tries to go beyond a multidisciplinary approach to communication and make a step towards a truly interdisciplinary framework by addressing the key notion of *context of communication*. In fact, the construction of an interdisciplinary framework for communication requires an explicit definition of communication context and, in partic-

---

[1] *Communication theory* would arguably be such discipline. However, while communication theory exists as a taught subject, at least in some academic traditions, and there are valiant attempts at providing comprehensive introductions to it (Littlejohn 1996), it does not exist a fully autonomous discipline. Craig (1999: 119) in an article published in the journal *Communication Theory* goes as far as to say that "despite the ancient roots and growing profusion of theories about communication, I argue that communication theory as an identifiable field of study does not yet exist". In fact, it would be difficult to say that the "profusion of theories" about communication has been developed *within* communication theory. What happens is that the various disciplines that have to do with communication grow their own theories, and that communication theory in its present state *draws* from this multiplicity of contributions rather than *providing* disciplines with the communication theories they need.

[2] The literature on complexity, emergent phenomena and the risks of reductionism is abundant. See, for instance, Arecchi (2001) for a discussion from a physicist's viewpoint that takes the neurophysics of perception as an example of emergence. A discussion of reductionism and emergence in the cognitive sciences in connection to the problem of consciousness is also found in Searle (1992).

ular, of the specific structure of those contexts that correspond to social-
ly relevant types of communicative interactions.

As a matter of fact, many areas of research in communication sciences
seem to be built around a specific, more or less broad, class of commu-
nication contexts (corporate communication, healthcare communica-
tion, political communication, etc.), while other disciplines, such as, for
instance, the language sciences, seem to tackle communication processes
that are, to some extent, "context invariant" even when those disciplines
approach these processes *in context* and build models that emphasize the
role of context in communication. Such a distinction in the way disci-
plines approach communication has a certain immediacy and intuitive
plausibility, but is of limited use as long as we don't know what the vari-
ous *contexts* have in common – or, in other words, what it means to be a
context in general. An explicit notion of context could help us to articu-
late, almost to factor out, the astonishing complexity of our object, with-
out losing the constitutive relationships among the different factors.

The importance of *context* has been illustrated in detail and in depth
by the analyses of communicative interaction developed within various
strands of the language sciences by showing how communication context
not only constitutes an essential factor in the processes of production and
interpretation of speech acts, but also is integral to the constitution of
meaning itself. We situate our proposal within this tradition of research.
Before discussing such technical notions of *communication context*, how-
ever, it is useful to start by elucidating the general notion of *context*
through a semantic analysis of the word as it is used in ordinary dis-
course.

2. Context: towards a semantic analysis

The term *context* was in its origin a felicitous Latin metaphor that arose,
not by chance, in relation to verbal communication within a rhetorical
milieu[3]. It shows, from a semantic point of view, a typically relational

---

[3] The metaphoric use of *contextus* (literally "weaving together") shares with the related
word *textus* (properly "texture") the focus on the similarity of the structure of a human
discourse with the thick network of warps and wefts that builds up a fabric. This word
was, indeed, used by Cicero, Quintilian and others to indicate the weaving together of
various linguistic elements for constructing a coherent discourse structure. It is worth
mentioning that Plato used in his Sophista an analogous metaphor (*symploké*, "weav-
ing" or "plaiting") to refer to the compositional nature of discourse.

nature (corresponding to a two-place predicate). In order to congruently use this word, one has to specify, beyond the domain *x* referred to as context, also the concerned topic *y* in relation to which this domain *x* is said to be the context. There is no context that is not the *context of* something else. The predicate-argument structure of *context* may thus be represented as follows:

CONTEXT (x, y)

where CONTEXT represents the two-place predicate *to be the context of*, having two argument places, the *context* (x) and the *contextualized* (y), as in

(1) *The Italian 16ᵗʰ Century is the context of Romeo's and Juliet's Tragedy.*

We will proceed in the semantic analysis[4] of the predicate CONTEXT (x, y) by providing first a fuller characterization of the requirements of the argument places *x* and *y*. To this purpose, we examined a sample of occurrences of the word *context* extracted from a large corpus[5], to establish the classes of arguments that can occupy the argument slots x and y.

A semantic approach shows that, although within our corpus many different linguistic structures can occur both in argument place x and in y (from noun phrases, to entire sentences), semantically they correspond, in every case, to *states of affairs* and not to simple entities.

---

[4] The analysis we present here relies on the theoretical approach to meaning and on the set of methodological tools developed by Congruity Theory (Rigotti & Rocci 2001; Rigotti 2005; Rigotti, Rocci & Greco 2006) within a broader tradition of linguistic semantics. A detailed methodological discussion of the various steps a semantic analysis according to Congruity Theory, including the semantic tests that are employed, can be found in (Rigotti, Rocci & Greco 2006: 258-262).

[5] We extracted a random sample of 100 occurrences of the wordforms *context*(-s) from the 9673 occurrences appearing in the *British National Corpus* (henceforth BNC). The BNC is a 100 million-word corpus of current British English consisting of 3,261 written texts from a variety of genres (90 million words) and 863 transcribed oral samples (10 million words). The analysis of the corpus data will be discussed extensively in a forthcoming publication.

Table 1. The argument frame of the predicate context as manifested by a small selection of examples from the BNC sample examined.

1.	*Shawcross raises these questions within the context of disaster relief but they have a broader setting.* (CMB)[6]	x = 'disaster relief' y = '(raising of) questions'
2.	*This ignores the particular contexts of individual schools, and the way they differ.* (FAM)	x = tacit y = 'individual schools'
3.	*It will rarely be possible to establish non est factum when a person has signed a document containing standard terms in a commercial context.* (J7C)	x = 'commerce' y = 'signing a document containing standard terms'
4.	*The cultural context of rain forest conservation in West Africa* (HJ1)	x = '[a specific] culture' y = 'rain forest conservation in West Africa'
5.	*Accordingly, this chapter will attempt to provide a consideration of key matters which describe the organizationa l context of investment decision - making and the process of managing the changes associated with major investments or strategic moves .* (GUC)	x = '[an] organization' y = 'investment decision making'
6.	*The most likely explanation for the difference is the con text in which the judgments were made, clearly the normality of any individual film will depend on the types of situation that are seen with it.* (HPM)	x = tacit y = 'judgments'
7.	*It also emphasizes how the generalized context of racism in the school was relevant to their conclusion that the murder of* [NN] *was a "racial" murder.* (FAY)	x = 'racism in the school' y = 'the murder of NN'

If we say, for example, *George Orwell wrote his works in the context of a harsh ideological confrontation* the contextualised is not simply George Orwell, but his whole writing activity. The superficial verbal manifestation must be sometimes overridden: if we state that *The context of Dante Alighieri is the 13th Century* we are not considering "Dante Alighieri" as a simple entity, because we implicitly evoke his life, his literary works, his political interests and so on. In the same way, the other argument – *the 13th Century–* , refers to the various events, situations and activities characterizing such a historical period: the political system, the cultural environment and so on.

We have thus established that a precise presupposition is imposed by the predicate CONTEXT onto its arguments: both the context and the contextualized consist of states of affairs, even though they do not necessarily belong to the same world, as the context x always belongs to the "real" world but the contextualised y can belong, as the case may be, to the real world or to a possible one[7]. In any case the two arguments do not

---

[6] The alphanumeric codes are used in the BNC to univocally retrieve the bibliographic data of the source text of the corpus material. The full list of source texts ordered by code can be consulted on the BNC website at the following address: http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/userManual/bncIndex.html.

[7] The contextualised may be a possible event or a planned action whose realisation within a certain context is imagined, as in *In the context of the present day economic crisis the start up of new firm would be unreasonable.*

belong to the same scale rank; indeed in order to be the context of y, x is required to encompass y with respect to a certain dimension (the time, the spatial collocation, the discourse, the scientific and cultural belonging and so on). In other words, for x to be the context of y entails being the *whole* the contextualised y is a part of.

The conditions we identified so far do not exhaust the semantic content of *context*. One can say, for instance, that, from a chronological point of view, and also from a geographical one, the early development of banking in Europe, and more particularly in Florence, surrounds the life of Dante Alighieri, but since this contemporary historical development did not significantly affect Dante's life or his literary works, it would be rather improper – barring biographical or philological discoveries – to say that *Dante wrote in the context of the rise of the Florentine bankers* unless it is to comment on a particular verse of the *Divine Comedy* dealing with, say, usury. But then banking is the context of *that* passage, not of Dante's literary work as a whole.

In fact, when the predicate CONTEXT (x, y) is the case, a dynamic connection is stated in both directions between the two argument states of affairs x and y. On the one side the context x is seen as imposing a set of conditions onto the contextualised y. The context x cannot be indifferent for the contextualised y: the contextualised has to "take into account" its context. On the other side, the contextualised y assumes the context x as its "target", or as the domain of reality within which it intervenes and "works", somehow modifying it.

Therefore both, the contextualised and the context, show an active nature: the former comes out to be an action or an action-like event, the latter emerges as an activity or an activity-like environment. We might summarize these aspects by saying that the context does not *simply* surround the contextualised: it does so *significantly*. The predicate CONTEXT entails that *x surrounds significantly y*. Here follows the scheme summarizing the semantic analysis we have sketched so far:
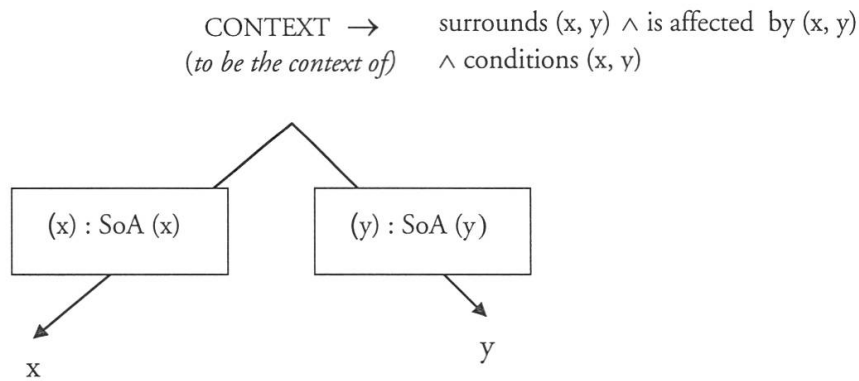
CONTEXT $\rightarrow$ surrounds (x, y) $\wedge$ is affected by (x, y)
(*to be the context of*) $\wedge$ conditions (x, y)

(x) : SoA (x)   (y) : SoA (y)

x   y

Figure 1: The semantic analysis of context expressed in the terms of Congruity Theory

Our semantic analysis entails a relevant consequence: as with *context* we do not simply designate a larger reality including the contextualised, but, properly, that *immediately relevant surrounding* reality in relation to which the contextualised reality is a moment, the contextualised can be properly understood only if its context is known and taken into account. More precisely, the context assigns to the contextualised its meaning for the aspect of it that properly *works* as contextualised. It is indeed to notice that various aspects of *y* may entail different contexts. The context of the existence of a person might turn out to be differently specified in relation to the different moments, activities and aspects of her life. For instance, as far as she is a professor, her context is the university, as far as she is a mother, her context is her own family.

As it is often the case in semantic analysis, it is important in relation to our predicate not to confuse the semantic and the syntactic levels. If we indeed consider the following two sentences:

(2) *The context of the current US international politics is the most serious global energy crisis of the last century*
(3) *The context of the current US international politics will significantly affect the next mid-term electoral campaign*
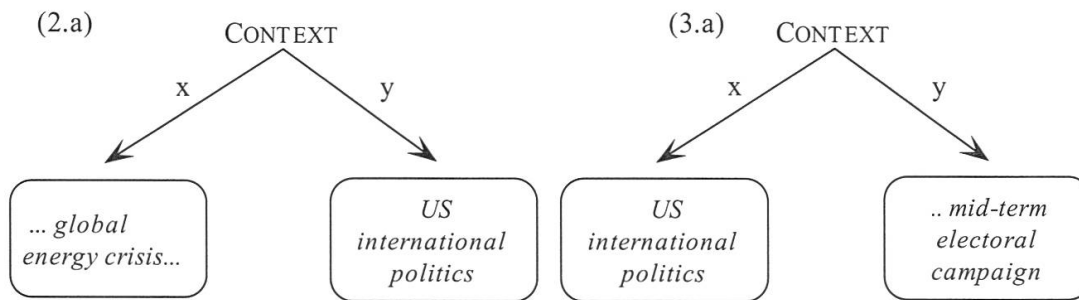
Figure 2: Divergent mappings of the argument places of CONTEXT (x,y) onto syntactic actants in examples (2.a) and (2.b)

We notice that in (2) the syntactic structure "*the context of*" introduces a noun phrase (NP) corresponding to the contextualized y – as shown in (2.a), while in (3) it introduces an NP corresponding to the very context x (3.a). What here matters is the polysemy of the phrase *of NP*, which in the first case manifests the second argument of our predicate, specifying exactly what is contextualised, while in the second case it assumes the value of the so called epexegetical genitive[8] and announces the context itself. For instance *The generalized context of racism in the school* in Table 1, example 7 seems to favour an epexegetical reading (racism = x), but one could very well use the phrase *the context of racism* to indicate the social, economic and cultural conditions in which racist attitudes and behaviour develop (racism = y). Relational-argumental adjectives such as *commercial*, *cultural* and *organizational* in Table 1 are generally interpreted epexegetically as manifestations of the x argument. In turn, the presence of an adjective of this class modifying *context* induces a non-epexegetical reading of the NP complement introduced by *of* as in Table 1, example 5: *the [x: organizational] context of [y: investment decision-making]*.

Our semantic analysis of the predicate CONTEXT (x, y) suggests that there is a relationship of mutual relevance between the context and the contextualized; the contextualised can be properly understood only if its context is known. In fact, the context gives the contextualised its *meaning*, in the sense that it allows us to assign the contextualised the actual function it has in relation to the immediately relevant surrounding totality.

---

[8] Typical examples of epexegetical genitive are the uses of the preposition *of* in *the city of Berlin* or in *the virtue of justice*.

3. Context of communication

It is time now to conclude our semantic detour, and return to the issue of the context of *communication* and try to find out how the abstract features of *context* examined above can be substantiated in the case of communication. What counts as context in communication? What kind of object should we assume as the contextualised in communication? What kind of conditions does the context of communication context impose on the contextualised? And finally, how does the contextualised affect the context in its turn?

It is clear that these questions can be approached taking different perspectives and at different levels of description and analysis. We can count, however, on a broad tradition within the sciences of language that systematically addressed context as a key factor for understanding the functioning of verbal communication.

It is customary to say that the role of context in the interpretation of verbal utterances became a central concern in the language sciences after the "pragmatic turn" they progressively took during the last quarter of the XXᵗʰ century. It is true that context was relegated to a relatively minor role in the central years of the past century, where transmission models of communication based on processes of coding and decoding prevailed in linguistics, semiotics as well as in the social sciences of communication (cf. Rigotti & Greco 2006). It has to be pointed out, however, that while that significant strands of linguistics in the late XIXᵗʰ and early XXᵗʰ assigned an important role to context in the construction of meaning, often providing analyses of surprising depth and insightfulness. These reflections tie the context dependency of the meaning of the verbal signs to the role of inferences in verbal communication. We could mention Michel Bréal's recognition of the subtle *context dependency* of a number of linguistic structures in his essay on "latent ideas in language" (Bréal 1868/1995), the role assigned to inferences (*Schlüsse*) relying both on the meaning of verbal signs and on the shared experience of reality in Philip Wegener (1885/1991: 128), and, later the work of Karl Bühler (1934), who, in his *Organonmodell*, not only offers a systematic treatment of 'indexicals' (*Zeigwörter*), but sketches a conception of the language system as a set of instructions, offering partially specified patterns to guide the interpretation of the hearer which is conducted with a "detective attitude" – thus anticipating the works in instructional and procedural semantics of the 1980s (cf. for instance Blakemore 1987).

In the 1920s, in Russia, the so-called "Bakhtin Circle" developed a view of the role of context in the interpretation of verbal messages which focuses both on the role of inferences and on the social nature of the context. Its most striking presentation appears in a 1926 article signed by Valentin Vološinov[9]. The functioning of an act of verbal communication according to Vološinov (1926/1983) can be equated to an *enthymeme*, that is to an inferential mechanism where the purely verbal part of the utterance represents only one of the premises and needs to be combined with another tacit premise (or set of premises) in order to derive the full meaning of the communicative act. Vološinov characterizes this kind of inferential process as a *social objective enthymeme* due to the nature of the tacit premises it relies on, that is of the non-verbal context of the utterance:

> This non-verbal context of the utterance is formed out of three factors: 1) a spatial purview common to the speakers [...], 2) the couple's common *knowledge and understanding of the circumstances*, and finally 3) their common *evaluation* of these circumstances. (Vološinov 1926/1983: 11).

As observed by Pateman (1989), Vološinov's view of the context and its role in interpretation foreshadows a basically inferential conception of communication that was to be fully developed only with Grice's William James Lectures (Grice 1975), and anticipates even more closely the notion common ground (Stalnaker 1973 and 2002; Clark 1996) independently developed in the philosophy of language and in linguistic pragmatics. The *enthymeme* itself, then a half-forgotten piece of logico-rhetorical terminology, was later to be rediscovered by American rhetoricians (Bitzer 1959) in its full original communicative significance in connection with shared beliefs and values, and finally fully integrated within a pragmatic view of argumentation (Jackson & Jacobs 1980; Rocci 2006).

During the last decades what we could call the *interpretive* function of the context of utterance has been the object of a huge literature. Besides being one of the central concerns of the inferential pragmatics tradition (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1986; Thomason 1990), context has received the attention of a strand of anthropologically and sociologically oriented linguistic work. This broad strand of research[10], foreshadowed in part by

---

[9] As it is often the case with works of the Bakhtinian entourage in this period the actual authorship of the article is disputed. Some scholars have attributed the essay to Bakhtin himself rather than to his friend and disciple.
[10] Cf. Duranti & Goodwin (1992) for a synthesis and an anthology.

Malinowski's study on meaning in primitive languages (Malinowski 1923) and developed under the impulse of Erving Goffman's work on social interaction (cf. for instance Goffmann 1964) produced a number of approaches to the study of language use in context, such as the *ethnography of speaking* (Hymes 1971 and 1974) and *interactional sociolinguistics* (Gumperz 1982). Hymes' (1971) well known SPEAKING model, which is intended as a guide for ethnographic description of *speech events*, identifies eight basic contextual variables, which seem based on a quite different rationale: S(etting), P(articipants), E(nds), A(act sequence), K(ey), I(nstrumentalities), N(orms), G(enres).

Authors such as Levinson (1979/1992) and Allwood (2000) have proposed revisions and rigorizations of Hymes' model of the *speech event*, proposing (partial) models of context that emphasize embeddedness of speech within social activities and merge the anthropological linguistic tradition with the inferential pragmatics tradition. Under many respects our present proposal can be situated in the same line.

There is another, relatively recent, strand of linguistic research on context on which we draw in order to approach, in particular, the double relationship between context and verbal utterances – context as the significant surrounding of the communication event but also as what is, in turn, affected by communication. During the 1980s and 1990s, linguists and logicians working on the semantics of natural languages have increasingly looked at meanings *dynamically*; that is in terms of their *context-change potential* rather than in terms of a static language-world relationship to be studied at the sentence level[11]. In the perspective of *dynamic semantics*, semantics deals with the way in which language contributes to update and revise a shared representation of the world – the *common ground*. In an ongoing discourse within a communication event each assertive speech act updates the common ground with a new proposition contributing to the shared representation (cf. Stalnaker 1978). The new, updated, common ground, will act as the context of interpretation for the subsequent utterances in the discourse or in the conversation.

However, not all the "semantic material" in the predicate-argument structure of an utterance is an update to the common ground. Verbal utterances also have *presuppositions*: propositions that need to be satisfied (verified) in the *current* common ground in order to guarantee the meaningfulness (or *congruity*, see Rigotti & Rocci 2001) of the utterance.

---

[11] For an insightful discussion of this trend see Peregrin (1999).

Consider the following utterance:

(5) *John* **quit** *smoking.*

Because of the presupposition imposed by the predicate *quit* this sentence like can be uttered meaningfully if John has been, in fact, a smoker in the past and is communicatively felicitous when uttered to update the knowledge of someone who knew that he was a smoker. In the case John has never been a smoker the utterance becomes objectively meaningless, and in the case the hearer did not know that he was (or worse believed he wasn't) the utterance can become communicatively problematic unless the hearer *accommodates* (cf. Lewis 1979; Thomason 1990; Greco 2003) the presupposition treating it *as if* it was already part of the *common ground*. Thus when we communicate we act upon the shared context, either by explicitly updating it, or by implicitly imposing accommodations to our interlocutors.

Most semanticists treat the notion of context change in purely cognitive terms as the update of a shared information base. However, the notion of context change acquires its full import when we take into account the properly pragmatic level considering utterances as full speech acts, inclusive of their *illocutionary forces* (Searle 1969). That is as social actions.

4. Context as constitutive

When we consider utterances as speech acts, that is as social actions, a new role of the context becomes apparent. At the speech act level, context clearly acquires, beyond its *interpretive* dimension, also what we could call an "objective" or *constitutive* dimension. The constitutive dimension emerges both in terms of *context dependence* of the speech-act from the context and in terms of its *context change* potential. Consider the utterance of an apparently simple speech-act like (6):

(6) *Class dismissed!*

(A) On the one hand, the performance of the speech act objectively depends on the satisfaction in the context of a series of contextual requirements[12], which the in the speech-act tradition have been various-

---

[12] Even if Austin (1962) does not handle explicitly the notion of context, this latter is

ly called *felicity* or *successfulness* conditions, which we have argued are largely presuppositional in nature (Rigotti & Rocci 2001). A speech-act like (6) presupposes that the speaker is a teacher addressing a class of students, that these students are *her* students, and that at the moment of utterance she was teaching the class. If a student in the first row utters (6) his utterance cannot count as the same speech act. Similarly, the teacher's utterance of (6) would be equally void if there was no lesson going on, or it was a lesson taught by another teacher. These requirements are structurally similar to the presuppositions imposed by predicates at the level of propositional content, but differ from them qualitatively in a crucial way: they are not preconditions for evaluating the truth-value of a represented content, but preconditions of the successful performance of a social action in the actual world[13].

(B) On the other hand, this same context represents the target directly affected by the speech act. The context is the reality directly changed by the speech act. After the utterance of (6) the context that licensed the utterance as felicitous has changed in a decisive way: the class is now dismissed. The change is such that the new context will not licence the utterance of an identical speech act, and not because of the risk of annoying the hearer with repetitions, but because the conditions are not there anymore: the communicative activity of the lesson in which the teacher and the students were involved has already been concluded by the previous speech act and the participants in the communicative event do not have the same rights and obligations anymore. The actual social reality has changed.

found to be crucial in his analysis of performative utterances: "Speaking generally, it is always necessary that the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, *appropriate*, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also* perform certain *other* actions, whether 'physical' or 'mental' actions or even acts of uttering further words. Thus, for naming the ship, it is essential that I should be the person appointed to name her, for (Christian) marrying, it is essential that I should not be already married with a wife living, sane and undivorced, and so on: for a bet to have been made, it is generally necessary for the offer of the bet to have been accepted by a taker (who must have done something, such as to say 'Done'), and it is hardly a gift if I say 'I give it to you' but never hand it over." (*Ibid.*: 9).
[13] Note that the act of the student is not simply a violation of a *normative* rule – like, say, smoking in a nonsmoking area – as it fails to satisfy a constitutive condition of the social, institutional, act of dismissing the class. From the point of view of institutional reality the act did not happen. If I say that *students cannot dismiss the class*, the modal *can* is not used in its *deontic* (normative) sense – referring obligation or permission – but in its *thetic* (contitutive) sense (cf. Conte 1988).

Here we want to suggest that in order to make the notion of *context* an interdisciplinary kernel for communication sciences we need to concentrate, first of all, on its *constitutive* dimension, which emerges as soon as we consider the properly pragmatic dimension of speech acts, or, in other words, as we consider communication as social action. With some noteworthy exceptions, such as Sbisà (2002), this social, constitutive dimension has received incomparably less attention than the interpretive dimension in the literature.

If we look more closely to the way in which the speech act in (6) interacts with its context we discover that this act is less basic than what it seems at first sight. It is not a ground level act but rather a metalevel act which intervenes upon an ongoing *joint activity*[14] of the speaker and the hearer: the *lesson*; an activity which is itself communicative in nature, a sort of *dialogue game* (Mann 1988) whose goals are necessarily to some extent mutually known and accepted by the speaker and the audience. The speech act in (6) acts upon this dialogue game and ends it.

A dialogue game such as the one presupposed by (6) is hardly wholly created from scratch by the speaker and the hearer – even if explicit or implicit negotiation by the participants can go a long way in establishing novel goals shared by participants or in refining existing ones. The joint activity of the speaker and its audience, their dialogue game, is easily established as a framework for cooperative behaviour because it is recognized as an instantiation of the culturally known type of the *lesson*. This is what Levinson (1979/1992) called an *activity type*. Incidentally, it can be remarked that activity types also provide activity specific expressive forms, which enrich the linguistic system: in (6) the idiomatic phrase *class dismissed* is one such form; knowing its meaning and use amounts to knowing the activity type of the *lesson*.

In the following section we provide a model of the context of communication where the notion of *activity type* plays a fundamental role. We will see, however, that this notion needs to be further analysed and decomposed into more primitive components in order to illuminate two different aspects of the functioning of contexts.

---

[14] For the notion of joint activity we refer to Clark (1996): "As language use arises in joint activities, these are impossible without using language. Two or more people cannot carry out a joint activity without communicating, and that requires language use in its broadest sense. Yet whenever people use language, they are taking joint actions. Language use and joint activity are inseparable. The conclusion, once again, is that we cannot understand one without the other." (Clark 1996: 29).

Before entering into the components of the model, however, we still need to focus on one fundamental aspect of the constitutive relationship between speech acts and contexts, namely the nature of the change effected by the speech act in the context.

The *illocutionary* level of speech acts is often described as the manifestation of an intention of the speaker, and as an attempt at obtaining perlocutionary effects by way of it: a request, for instance, expresses the speaker's desire that the hearer do something and counts as an attempt to get the hearer to do it. As observed by Sbisà in various publications[15], this view does not correspond exactly to Austin's original view of illocution. For Austin (1977) illocutionary acts had effects of their own and these effects where *conventional* in nature. Exploring the conventional nature of the illocutionary effects helps us to clarify how speech-acts can relate to context in a constitutive manner.

The *conventional* effects brought about in the context by illocutionary acts can be understood in terms *commitments* (Searle 1969). Consider the following dialogue:

(7) A parent is calling the doctor:
Parent: *My child is burning with fever!*
Doctor: *Could you come to my practice right now?*
Parent: *Yes.*

The utterance of *Yes* by the parent effects a change in the mutual commitments of the parent and the doctor: the parent accepts the doctor's proposal and commits herself to take immediately the child to the doctor's practice. While, on the other side, by formulating the proposal, the doctor sets up an implicit pre-commitment[16] to visit the child immediately. This commitment is activated when the parent accepts the proposal. Whatever will be the subsequent behaviour of the participants, the social reality of their mutual rights and obligations has already been changed.

At the illocutionary level, context change has to be understood mainly as the update of the set of the mutual commitments of the participants.

---

[15] Cf. for instance Sbisà (2001 and 2002).
[16] We take the notion of pre-commitment from the work of Colombetti and his group on speech-act based languages for artificial agents. Cf. Colombetti, Fornara & Verdicchio (2003: 79).

Such a dynamics can be thought of as an extension of the model of the *common ground*. While in Stalnaker's original formulation (1973 and 1978) – and in some dynamic semantic models (Roberts 2004) – context change is understood in purely cognitive terms it seems quite natural to revisit it incorporating Hamblin's independently developed dynamic notion of a *commitment store*[17] (Hamblin 1970; Corblin 2003) in order to tackle the social nature of context change at the illocutionary level.

Still, it has to be recognized that the treatment of illocutionary level, in the end, is not sufficient by itself to tell the whole story about communication effects. There is a perlocutionary level of effects that is not reducible to the changes in the commitment store brought about by illocutionary acts. In (7) the parent, if she wants her child to recover, still needs to honour her commitment and physically bring her to the doctor.

Sanctioning the violation of commitments is one way to make the perlocutionary level follow from the illocutionary level: contracts are "legally enforceable" commitments regulated by an institution that goes beyond the simple intersubjectivity of the participants. But, as we will see, in all contexts, the institutional dimension is intertwined with another dimension, which we shall call interpersonal.

5. A model of communication context

We conclude our discussion by proposing a model of communication context with a fundamental orientation towards the *constitutive* aspects. It is not aimed at including every kind of information that can enter the common ground, nor every kind of dimension that can be relevant for interpreting utterances. The material situation and the temporal-spatial coordinates of the communication event do not figure in the model, notwithstanding their prominent role in interpretation in resolving the reference of deictic linguistic units.

[17] Within his attempt to formulate a formal dialectic system within which a consistent interpretation of 'validity' and 'truth' could be found, Hamblin (1970) puts in the centre of his system the notion of commitment-store, as a mean to define what can be taken for true or not by the interlocutors in an argumentative exchange: "A speaker who is obliged to maintain consistency needs to keep a store of statements representing his previous commitments, and require of each new statement he makes that it may be added without inconsistency in this store. The store represents a kind of persona of beliefs: it need not correspond with his real beliefs, but it will operate, in general, approximately as if it did. We shall find that we need to make frequent reference to the existence, or possibility, of stores of this kind. We shall call them commitment-stores: they keep a running tally of a person's commitments." (Hamblin 1970: 257).

What we propose is essentially a model of the *social* context of communication; as it is the social context that constrains the performance of illocutionary acts and that is directly affected by them[18].

It might be useful, then, to briefly outline our view of context, starting with a graphical representation of its components. The model distinguishes an *institutionalized* and an *interpersonal* dimension within communication context (cf. Muller & Perret-Clermont 1999 for a similar distinction.)[19]
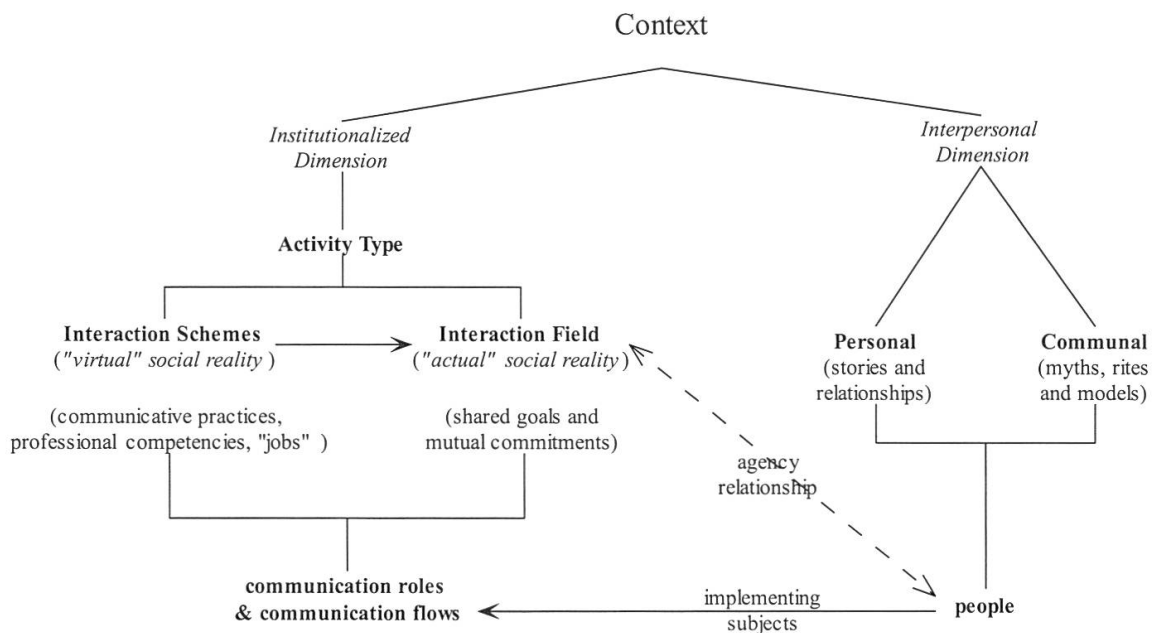

Figure 3: The communication context

The central notion within the *institutionalised dimension* of context is that of *activity type*, a notion developed by Levinson (1979/1992) and

[18] In fact, we also believe, with Levinson (1979/1992), that this social context of communication also plays a distinctive role in *interpretation* in shaping the inference strategies of the addressee at a strategic level, a role that should be kept distinct from the role that just any piece of information in the common ground can have in providing premises for the pragmatic inferences of the interpreter. Due to space considerations, we will spare for another publication the discussion of the significance of our model for interpretation.

[19] Muller & Perret-Clermont (1999) in a work devoted to exploring the functioning of a *learning context* in supporting the acquisition and use of various types of knowledge, make a tripartite distinction between *institutional context, interindividual context* and *cultural context.*

developed by van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2005). According to Levinson, activity types are "a fuzzy category whose focal-members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with constraints on participants, setting and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions"(p. 69). Examples of activity types given by Levinson are *teaching*, *job interview*, *jural interrogation*, *dinner party*.

In the model presented here *activity types* are a *derived* notion generated by the merge of two aspects of context which can be profitably distinguished: the *interaction field* and the *interaction schemes*.

The *interaction field* is that piece of *social reality* where the communicative interaction takes place. An interaction field is defined by specific (hierarchically organized) *shared goals*, which all the interagents share beyond their individual goals, and which define the interagents' mutual commitments. For instance, a *business* is distinguished from other kinds of institution, because it's main shared goal is that of making profit. Other interaction fields have other kinds of shared goals (e.g. an hospital should take care of patients and possibly cure them, etc.). The shared goal which is pursued by the interaction field is *de iure* the final aim of all the institutional interactions occurring in the interaction field itself. Interaction fields generate *social roles*, which are bundles of pre-existing commitments that constrain the possibilities of interaction.

Interaction fields can be seen at different levels of zooming: we can speak of the *general frame* of an interaction fields and of its specific *spots*. For instance, we can say that the general frame of my lecturing in Lugano is the "system of Swiss higher education", while the specific relevant spot is "a particular master program offered by the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the University of Lugano".

An *operational* interaction can be characterized from the viewpoint of the interaction field as communication whose effect is limited to the activation of commitment possibilities pre-set by the field: its effects in term of context change is like the setting and resetting of switches on a switchboard. While a *strategic* interaction (cf. Mengis & Eppler 2005; von Krogh & Roos 1995) is one whose effect in terms of context change involves a reshaping of the interaction field, including the creation of new long-term shared goals, roles and institutional realities. The distinction between the two is clearly a matter of degree, as the structures of the field have a different degree of stability and can be more or less pliable by communication.

Second component of the institutionalised context, the *interaction schemes* are not actual pieces of social reality but culturally shared "recipes" for interaction congruent with more or less broad classes of joint goals and involving scheme-roles presupposing generic requirements. *Deliberation, negotiation, advisory, problem-solving, adjudication, mediation, teaching* are fairly broad interaction schemes; while more specific interaction schemes may correspond to proper "jobs". The same interaction schemes can be found in different interaction fields: for instance we can find deliberation by a board of directors in a business and deliberation by a city council in public administration. Interaction schemes predefine the kind of dialogue games that are relevant to their goals and thus the range of admissible speech acts and, in part, their arrangement. As we have seen with example (6) above, an interesting case is represented by the speech acts of opening and closing an activity, which are bound to interaction schemes, such as in the case of (6), the lecture. Interaction schemes can suggest *speech genres* (Bakhtin 1986) which act as standard rhetorical templates to achieve the goals of the scheme. At the same time interaction schemes provide, as observed by Levinson (1979/1992: 72-79), specific *inferential schemata* for the interpretation of indirect speech acts. The utterance of *It's five past 10 now* by the lecturer in the context of a lecture functions as an indirect way to begin the activity.

It should be emphasized that interaction schemes are "virtual" in nature: they are a kind of culturally shared procedural knowledge and do not have the full binding force of a context. In order to obtain an actual context I need to map an interaction scheme onto an interaction field where real commitments are present. To do so the roles of the interaction scheme need to be made to correspond to compatible roles in the interaction field[20]. For instance, the interaction scheme of *lecturing* is mapped onto the interaction field of the University of Lugano to obtain the full context of my teaching. It is only within the full context that I can assess the felicity of speech acts like opening and closing a lecture activity, which presuppose that I am teaching *my* class to *my* students. If I had sneaked into the class of a colleague at the University of Lausanne my utterance of *It's five past 10 now* would have been infelicitous, and perhaps incomprehensible, irrespectively of my skills as a lecturer.

---

[20] Here one should point out that the use of thee same term *role* for both hides a difference: the roles of an interaction scheme are best understood as "job descriptions", while the roles of the interaction field as bundles of actual commitments.

With respect to interaction schemes, we can distinguish between *routine* (Becker 2005), where the goals of the dialogue are achieved through standard procedures (cf. Clark 1996: 296-297), and *non-routine*, where the shared goals are achieved through a substantial negotiation of the joint action. There is a tendency for *operational* dialogues to be closer to *routine* and for *strategic* dialogues to be *negotiated* in a more open ended way, but the two dimensions are logically independent.

The implementation of interaction schemes within interaction fields generates a network of *roles* (Woodilla 1998; Hulstijn 2003) that are linked to each other through corresponding *communicative flows*[21]. The roles that are thus generated are "embodied" by *implementing subjects* that can be individual or collective.

In this relation, our scheme underlines the relevance of another component of context: the *interpersonal dimension*. An implementing subject is not to be understood as a simple "filler" of the institutional role: indeed, for each real (individual or collective) implementing subject, the subjective dimension always exceeds the institutional role. The subject keeps his or her interests and goals, which may be congruous with the role itself, or may be conflicting with it. It is, indeed, a typical case of *agency relationship*[22].

In the interpersonal dimension two types of interpersonal solidarity take place. The former concerns interpersonal relationships between individuals – Muller and Perret Clermont (1999) speak of *interindividual context* with respect to this dimension. The network of relationships, running parallel and distinct to that of *on record* roles and communication flows, plays an important part in determining the communication

---

[21] The light cast on the nature of *communication flows* is one interesting consequence of the proposed model of communication context. While in a transmission model of communication flows are naively understood through the "conduit metaphor" (Reddy 1979) as a sort of "imaginary cable network" pervading the organization, whose properties remain unclear, within the present model the *communication flow* can be interpreted insightfully as the repeated, stable occurrence of an *interaction scheme* between certain *roles* in an *interaction field*.

[22] Agency theory, a key instrument in explaining many economic and social phenomena, was defined by Stephen Ross (1973) as follows: "We will say that an agency relationship has arisen between two (or more) parties when one, designated as the agent, acts for, on behalf of, or as representative for the other, designated as the principal, in a particular domain of decision problems". The principal delegates a task, which entails a decision making activity, to the agent, and the agent gets a compensation for it. In such kinds of relationship a problem arises (the agency problem) because there is no alignment of goals between the two parties, and the agent tends to act, as much as possible, in her own interest.

context (cf. Scollon & Wong Scollon 2001: 41-42). In most dialogues it is possible to discern two distinct tracks, which proceed with a different tempo: *task oriented* communication, pursuing the goals relevant in the activity type at the current stage of development and *relationship oriented* communication, pursuing a different set of goals (Drew & Heritage 1992). Relational goals can be consummative or instrumental and can relate in different, more or less direct, ways to the goals prominent in the interaction field. In any case they tend to be pursued over the long term and from a diachronic point of view they give rise to shared *stories*. Stories, which make up an important segment of the *personal common ground* (Clark 1996: 112-116) of many dialogues, can be seen from a formal viewpoint as "lifelong discourse representation structures" (Alberti 2000) available for constant anaphorical resumption. Such stories may also turn out to influence the institutional dimension. Interpersonal relationships are more pliable than institutionalised social roles, and while the latter are typically the object of explicit restructuring in strategic communication the former tend to undergo constant implicit adaptation of their vertical and horizontal dimensions – often referred to as "conversational negotiation" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005: 93-186) –, most typically performed via the accommodation of the interpersonal presuppositions of displayed linguistic behaviour (for instance, the choice in the use of politeness pronouns, level of formality of register, etc.).

The latter type of solidarity concerns the particular link of individuals "belonging" to a community which creates *myths*, *rites* and *models* (Cantoni 2004); in other words, the proper *culture* of the interaction field – the *cultural context* in Muller and Perret Clermont (1999). From a communicative viewpoint, these three identity-forming dimensions are activated as *communal common ground* (Clark 1996: 100-112) that subjects establish on the basis of their membership in cultural communities.

There are, of course, communities corresponding to the commitments to shared goals established in the interaction field. The dynamic relationship between the institutional shared goals to which members of an organization are committed and the myths, rites and models shared in the corresponding cultural communities is a major topic in studies of organizational discourse (Grant, Keenoy & Oswick 1998), in particular those focussing on narratives (Salzer-Mörling 1998).

In a different way, also the sharing of practices – that is of interaction schemes – can give rise to a corresponding community among the prac-

titioners: a *community of practice* in this case. Communities of practice are furnished with their own myths, rites and models just as those corresponding to organizations.

***

The model of communication context expounded above, on the one hand, justifies interdisciplinarity in communication sciences, as it explain why disciplines studying the different social contexts are essential to understand communication. On the other hand, it already provides a first level of guidance in designing that precise kind of interdisciplinary approach that is required to explain communication at work in specific contexts.

References

ALBERTI, G. (2000). Lifelong discourse representation structure. *Gothenburgh Papers in Computational Linguistics* 00-5: 13-20.

ALLWOOD, J. (2000). An activity based approach to pragmatics. In: BUNT, H. & BLACK, W. (eds.). Abduction, belief and context in dialogue. Studies in computational pragmatics. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

ARECCHI, F.T. (2001). Complexity and emergence of meaning: toward a semiophysics. Presented at the Workshop "Complexity and Emergence" organized by the Academie Internationale de Philosophie des Sciences. Bergamo, Italy. 9-13 May 2001.

AUSTIN, J. L., (1977). How to do things with words (2nd ed.). In: URMSON, J.O. & SBISÀ, M. (eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

BAKHTIN, M.M. (1986). Speech genres and other late essays. EMERSON, C. & HOLQUIST, M. (eds.). (transl. by Vern W. McGee). Austin: University of Texas Press.

BECKER, M.C. (2005). A framework for applying organizational routines in empirical research: Linking antecedents, characteristics, and performance outcomes of recurrent interaction patterns. *Industrial and Corporate Change* 14/5: 817-846.

BITZER, L.F (1959). Aristotle's enthymeme revisited. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45: 399-408.

BLAKEMORE, D. (1987). Semantic constraints on relevance, Oxford: Blackwell.

BRÉAL, M. (1868/1995). Les idées latentes du langage. In: DESMET, P. & SWIGGERS, P. (eds.). De la grammaire comparée à la sémantique. Textes de Michel Bréal (1864-1898). Leuven/Paris: Peeters: 175-213.

BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS. Last retrieved on March 8, 2007 from http://www.nat-corp.ox.ac.uk/.

BÜHLER, K. (1934). Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache, 2nd ed. Stuttgard/New York: Gustav Fischer.

CANTONI, L. (2004). La comunicazione interna fra miti, riti e modelli: un approccio formativo. *FOR-Rivista per la Formazione* 61: 49-53.

CLARK, H.H. (1996). Using Language, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CRAIG, R.T. (1999) Communication Theory as a Field Communication Theory 9/2: 119-161.

COLOMBETTI, M.; FORNARA, N. & VERDICCHIO, M. (2003). Speech acts in artificial agent communication. In: GIACALONE RAMAT, A.; RIGOTTI, E. & ROCCI, A. (eds.). Linguistica e nuove professioni. Milano: Franco Angeli: 70-92.

CONTE, A. (1988). Eidos. An Essay on Constitutive Rules. *Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities*, 11 : 251-257.

CORBLIN, F. (2003). Presuppositions and commitment stores. In: KRUIJFF-KORBAYOVA, I. (ed.). Proceedings of the 7th Workshop on Formal Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue, Diabrück, Universität des Saarlandes.

DURANTI, A. & GOODWIN, C. (1992). Rethinking context: language as an interactive phenomenon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DREW, P. & HERITAGE, J. (1992). Analyzing talk at work: an introduction. In: DREW, P. & HERITAGE, J. (eds.). Talk at work. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 66-100.

EEMEREN, F.H. VAN & HOUTLOSSER, P. (2005). Theoretical Construction and Argumentative Reality: an Analytic Model of Critical Discussion and Conventionalised Types of Argumentative Activity. In: HITCHCOCK, D. & FARR, D. (eds.). The Uses of Argument. Proceedings of a Conference at McMaster University, 18-21 May 2005: 75-84.

GOFFMAN, E. (1964). The neglected situation. *American Anthropologist* 66/6-II. The Ethnography of Communication: 133-136.

GRANT, D.; KEENVOY, T. & OSWICK, C. (1998). Discourse and organization, London: Sage.

GRECO, S. (2003). When presupposing becomes dangerous. How the procedure of pre-suppositional accommodation can be exploited in manipulative discourses. *Studies in Communication Sciences* 3/2: 217-234.

GRICE, P.H. (1975). Logic and conversation. In: COLE, P. & MORGAN, J. (eds.). Syntax & Semantics 3: Speech Acts. New York: Academic Press.

GUMPERZ, J.J. (1982). Discourse Strategies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

HAMBLIN, C.L. (1970). Fallacies, London: Methuen.

HULSTIJN, J. (2003). Roles in Dialogue. In: KRUIJFF-KORBAYOVA, I. (ed.). Proceedings

of the 7th Workshop on Formal Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue, Diabrück, Universität des Saarlandes.

HYMES, D. (1971). On Communicative Competence, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

HYMES, D. (1974). Foundation of sociolinguistics: an ethnographic approach, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

JACKSON, S. & JACOBS, S. (1980). Structure of conversational argument. Pragmatic bases for the enthymeme. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 66/3: 251-266.

KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, C. (2005). Le discours en interaction, Paris: Armand Colin.

KROGH, G. VON & ROOS, J. (1995). Conversation Management. *European Management Journal* 13/4: 390-394.

LEVINSON, S.C. (1979/1992). Activity types and language. *Linguistics 17*. Reprinted in: DREW, P. & HERITAGE, J. (eds.). Talk at work. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 66-100.

LEWIS, D. (1979). Scorekeeping in a language game. *Journal of Philosophical Language* 8: 339-359. Reprinted in: DAVIS, S. (ed.). (1991). Pragmatics: a Reader. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 416-427.

LITTLEJOHN, S.W. (1996). Theories of Human Communication, 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

MANN, W.C. (1988). Dialogue games: conventions of human interaction. *Argumentation* 2/4: 511-532.

MALINOWSKI, B. (1923). The Meaning of Meaning. The problem of meaning in primitive languages, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

MENGIS, J. & EPPLER, M.J. (2005). Understanding and Managing Knowledge-Intensive Conversations. *Working Papers of the Institute for Corporate Communication*. University of Lugano 1/2005.

MULLER, N. & PERRET CLERMONT, A.-N. (1999). Dimensions institutionnelles, interpersonnelles et culturelles d'un dispositif pour penser et apprendre. *Cahiers de Psychologie* 35, December 1999: 3-15.

PATEMAN, T. (1989). Pragmatics in Semiotics: Bakhtin/Volosinov. *Journal of Literary Semantics* 38/3: 203-216.

PEREGRIN, J. (1999). Pragmatization of Semantics. In: TURNER, K. (ed.). The Semantics/Pragmatics Interface from Different Points of View. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

REDDY, M. (1979). The conduit metaphor. In: ORTONY, A. (ed.). Metaphor and Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

RIGOTTI, E. (1992). Reinterpretazione pragmatica di alcune categorie fondamentali della linguistica strutturale: livello, sintagma, paradigma. In: GOBBER, G. (ed.). La linguistica pragmatica. Proceeding of the XXIV Congress in International Studies.

Milano, 4-6 September 1990. Roma: Bulzoni.

RIGOTTI, E. (2003). La linguistica tra le scienze della comunicazione. In: GIACALONE RAMAT, A.; RIGOTTI, E. & ROCCI, A. (eds.). Linguistica e nuove professioni. Milano: Franco Angeli.

RIGOTTI, E. (2005). Congruity theory and argumentation. In: DASCAL, M. et. al. (2005). Argumentation in Dialogic Interaction. Special Issue of *Studies in Communication Sciences.*: 75-96.

RIGOTTI, E. (2007). Can classical topics be revived within the contemporary theory of argumentation? Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Argumentation. 27-30 June 2006. University of Amsterdam.

RIGOTTI, E. & ROCCI, A. (2001). Sens, non-sens, contresens. *Studies in Communication Sciences* 1: 45-80.

RIGOTTI, E. & GRECO, S. (2006). Communication: Semiotic Approaches. In: BROWN, K. (ed.). Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics 2 (2nd ed.). Amsterdam: Elsevier: 658-666.

RIGOTTI, E.; ROCCI, A. & GRECO, S. (2006). The semantics of reasonableness. In: HOUTLOSSER, P. & VAN REES, A. (eds.). Considering Pragma-Dialectics. A Festshrift for Frans H. van Eemeren. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

ROBERTS, C. (2004). Context in dynamic interpretation. In: HORN, L.R. & WARD, G.L. (eds.). The Handbook of Pragmatics. Oxford: Blackwell.

ROCCI, A. (2005). "Are Manipulative Texts Coherent? Manipulation, presuppositions, and (in-)congruity". In: L. Saussure & P. Schulz (eds.). *Manipulation and Ideologies in the Twenthieth century: Discourse, Language, Mind.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

ROCCI, A. (2006). Pragmatic inference and argumentation in intercultural communication. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 3-4: 409-442

ROSS, S.A. (1973). The Economic Theory of Agency: The Principal's Problem. *The American Economic Review* 63/2. Papers and Proceedings of the Eighty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, May 1973: 134-139.

SALZER-MÖRLING, M. (1998). As God created the Earth... A saga that makes sense? In: GRANT, D.; KEENVOY, T. & OSWICK, C. (1998). Discourse and organization. London: Sage.

SBISÀ, M. (2001). Illocutionary force and degrees of strength in language use. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 1791-1814.

SBISÀ, M. (2002). Speech acts in context. *Language & Communication* 22: 421-436.

SCOLLON, R. & WONG SCOLLON, S. (2001). Intercultural Communication (2nd ed.), Oxford: Blackwell.

SEARLE, J.R. (1969). Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

SEARLE, J.R. (1992). The rediscovery of the mind, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

SEARLE, J.R. (1995). The construction of social reality, New York: Free Press.

SPERBER, D. & WILSON, D. (1986). Relevance. Communication and Cognition, Oxford: Blackwell.

STALNAKER, R. (1973). Presuppositions. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 2: 447-457.

STALNAKER, R. (1978). Assertion. *Syntax and Semantics 9*. New York: Academic Press.

STALNAKER, R. (2002). Common Ground. *Linguistics & Philosophy* 25: 701-721.

THOMASON, R. (1990). Accommodation, meaning and implicature: interdisciplinary foundations for pragmatics. In: COHEN, P.R.; MORGAN, J. & POLLACK, M.E. (eds.). Intentions in Communication. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press: 325-363.

VOLOŠINOV, V. (1926/1983). Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics. In: SHUKMAN, A. (ed.). (1983). Bakhtin School Papers. *Russian Poetics in Translation* 10: 5-30.

WEGENER, PH. (1885/91). Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen des Sprachlebens. KNOBLOCH, C. & KOERNER, E.F.K. (eds.). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

WOODILLA, J. (1998). Workplace conversations: the text of organizing. In: GRANT, D.; KEENVOY, T. & OSWICK, C. (1998). Discourse and organization. London: Sage.