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MENZOGNA E SIMULAZIONE

a cura di

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Libro - esente di imposte sul valore aggiunto. Per ogni esempio
applicazione IVA ed esente da bolle di accompagnamento
(art. 2, lett. a. D.P.R. 633/1972 e art. 4, n. 4. D.P.R. 627/1978)



Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane

1997

On the Cross-Cultural Perception of In/Sincerity

0. Introduction

0.1. Summary

It is axiomatic in cross-cultural studies that the probability of misperceptions and miscommunication is highest when interactants come from different cultures or groups. Skewed stereotypes concerning other groups, are, partly, anyway, generated and perpetrated as a result of the relativity or mismatching of systems in contact, and most crucially when interactants are unaware that what is 'natural' to them is not necessarily 'natural' to the other. Furthermore, seemingly identical signifiers from different systems may be wrongly interpreted in terms of one's own system. This contributes towards intolerance of different 'others' (as not-understandable and/or not-likable).

I assume that cultures or local theories of language, meaning and social action (i.e. systems of implicits) are both reflected and constructed at the discourse or interaction level (also to some degree at the lexical and syntactic levels) and are thus somehow get-at-able. 'Denaturalizing' of local 'sedimented practices' would bring much-needed meta-communicative awareness and tolerance and appreciation of difference (cf. Fishman 1983), a healthy communicative ecology and education for peace (cf. eg. Candlin 1987, Halliday 1990).

I want to suggest that judgements of others' sincerity may not be made on universal bases. Rather that *what counts as* truthfulness, what it takes to be considered sincere, trustworthy, are to some degree, culture [or group (see Gudykunst 1991)] specific. This is also true of cooperativeness, solidarity, friendliness, politeness, likeability, not to mention intelligence/cleverness and gullibility. Moreover, these dimensions, the ideational (or informative or transactional) and the interpersonal (or affective or interactional) can be shown, by examining various types of linguistic data, to be intimately meshed in judgement and perception.

I characterize prototypically, i.e. polarize, two contrasting cultures and styles (although I hope readers will feel some pangs of recognition). I attempt to indicate plausible links between discourse style traits and posited value systems. I do this, in the interdisciplinary spirit of the conference, by borrowing, interpreting and trying to connect certain notions, from, among others, the fields of cognitive and cultural anthropology, sociology and cross-cultural psychology, not to mention, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, ethnography of communication and discourse analysis.¹ For example, I refer, among others, to the following pairs of concepts/constructs: Hall's High-Mid-Low Context Cultures and Codes, Toennies' *Gemeinschaft*/*Gesellschaft* distinction, Berstein's Elaborated vs Restricted Codes, Orality vs Literacy, Negative vs Positive Face and Politeness Types, Collectivism/Individualism, etc.

0.2. Aims

My aim here, then, is to very informally and tentatively explore some hunches concerning how *truth* and *sincerity* (or lying and insincerity), that is, truthfulness in discourse, might need to be seen in a culture-relative way. Sincerity, as I see it, is a function of a speaker's communicative intentions (see also Castelfranchi & Vincent in this volume) and of his or her assumptions concerning the hearer's probable interpretation or perception in a given context. The study of the interpretation of utterances is squarely in the domain of that exquisitely inter-disciplinary field known in linguistics as *pragmatics* (see e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1986b: 8, Blakemore 1992), and, it is *contrastive or cross-cultural* pragmatics (see e.g. Oleksy 1989, Wierzbicka 1990) that can methodologically best help us avoid premature or ethnocentric characterizations of the universality of discourse realization and value of *saying* the truth, among other things.²

¹ This inter-disciplinary attempt has inevitably become quite long (although I hope not too long-winded), involving as it does quite extensive bibliographical references. Furthermore, if interdisciplinary communication is to be successful one cannot presume too much common-ground terminology/notions, and must thus attempt to be explicit about one's own implicits (just as in cross-cultural communication).

² My remarks here are, indeed, to be seen as part of an on-going more general attempt to trace links between cultural matrix and communicative style in British and Italian (see for example Vincent-Marrelli 1988, 1989, 1990, 1994,

A more general practical aim of my work is to participate in the now happily increasingly widespread enterprise of trying to understand, and find solutions to, cross-cultural misunderstanding,³ through, for example, attempting to establish the basis on which to raise meta-communicative awareness⁴ among cross-cultural communicators. These are no longer a minority: cross-cultural communication is becoming more and more commonplace and relevant to everyone in today's world, and, therefore, all the more needful of attention.

A key word in my title is «perception». Individuals' perceptions are, in many ways, and to some degree, influenced by the culture or group with which they identify. I intend to imply that truth, or rather, being considered sincere, trustworthy and/or in good faith and solidary (and/or even intelligent) by one's interlocutors, may be culturally relative rather than absolute. It is what *counts as* truth, or what *counts as* solidarity in a particular culture, that counts (see also Vincent 1989). These, I suggest, are *locally* defined and evaluated. Honesty and sincerity may indeed be a *local* union of truth and solidarity, and truth is in the eye of the perceiver. This may make a few people sit up and listen, but it is not totally new in the literature.⁵

0.3. Structure of the paper

I shall be discussing this question in the following way:

section 1 outlines some theoretical and methodological premises concerning interpersonal perception, interpretation and cross-

1995, & in press). The perception of, and local definitions of sincerity, one possible focus, is however, probably of quite fundamental significance.

³ The ultimate aim also of, to name but a few, John J. Gumperz, Gail Nemetz Robinson, Deborah Tannen, William Gudykunst, Marshall Singer, Larry Smith, Michael Clyne, Anna Wierzbicka, etc. etc., all 'real-world' scholars from various disciplines interested in human interaction and ultimately peace education. There are many academic centres throughout the world now (directed by many of those I have mentioned) which also coordinate not only research but prepare and implement training programmes for cross-cultural communication.

⁴ A Necessary sub-aim specifically pursued by Applied Linguists interested in second language acquisition and use such as Eric Hawkins, Chris Candlin, Michael Halliday, Anna Cilberti, Guy Aston, Sue George, etc.

⁵ See Ervin-Tripp 1987: 48, Liebe-Harkort 1987, George 1990, and of course Ochs 1976, who first called into question the universality of conversational principles based on the assumption of truth telling or cooperation [not to mention Wilson & Sperber (passim) and Wilson this volume]. Some authors even go further to undermine the very universality of the definition of truth (see e.g. Lindstrom 1992).

cultural interaction; *section 2* presents a general and informal description of two prototypically polarized cultures and discourse styles; while *section 3* presents and analyses some illustrative interactions.

1. *Some premises*

1.1. There are salient and important sets of national stereotypes or perceptions of out-groups (see Forgas & O'Driscoll 1984) concerning their trustworthiness, sincerity, and good-will. Common-place linguistic expression of these take the form: '*x's are devious*', '*you can't get a straight answer from x's*', '*never believe what an x says or promises*'; '*y's will believe anything*', '*y's are fussy*', '*y's are hypocritical*', '*y's always do things by the book*', etc., etc. Stereotyping is the fixed version of the necessary and inevitable social categorization we do in order to be able to cope with our social environment. At its worst it becomes a method of disaffiliation or rejection of others, a rationalizing of prejudice. If it is an exaggerated belief associated with a category (e.g. of 'outsiders', 'others' from a different group) its function is to justify and rationalize our perceptions of and our behaviour towards that category – in our case people from a particular 'other' group or culture – (see also Saville-Troike 1989:195).

1.2. In cross-cultural (also called inter-cultural) interaction, (i.e. interaction between interlocutors from different cultures or groups),⁶ there is heightened possibility of serious misunderstanding for various reasons. This, seemingly paradoxically, increases with perceived high level of competence in a nonnative speaker interlocutor: rather than a *benevolence principle* (see Vincent 1989; Anderson & Vincent 1990) being invoked when dealing with foreigners in assumed conditions of uncertainty or in assumed conditions of imperfect knowledge, concerning the amount of shared knowledge, assumptions or beliefs, attitudes or 'modes of

⁶ The term 'culture' is applicable to any group which perceives itself as distinguishable from others and is perceivable as such [indeed, culture is an «act of identity» (to borrow Le Page & Tabouret-Keller's (1985) expression and adapt it to my purposes)]. So-called intercultural communication is only a special case of intergroup communication (see Singer 1987, Gudykunst 1991).

judgement' (to calque Parret's 1980:57ff expression), an interlocutor is deemed essentially to be fully responsible for his/her conveyed meaning (see e.g. Gumperz 1978:29). This may thus also lead to misinterpretation or misconstrual of their personality and, furthermore, to the generation and/or perpetration of negative or skewed stereotyped perceptions concerning the group of which the speaker is a member.⁷

It is, indeed, a basic premise in cross-cultural communication studies, that nonnative speakers (even the most seemingly competent) typically carry over from their native language/matrix culture their values, assumptions, belief systems, attitudes⁸ etc.,

⁷ «Stereotyping departs from observable reality» (for e.g. such discourse style or conversational features as overlapping or interrupting, shooting questions, etc.) «when such attributes as 'pushy' or 'rude' are inferred from these conversational strategies: i.e. judgements not about how people talk but about what kind of people they are» (Saville-Troike 1989:195). She illustrates from Tannen's work contrasting New York Jewish talk with Los Angeles non-Jewish talk. In New York Jewish talk (but see also Zorzi-Calò (1990) for Italian 'interrupting') the strategies are intended and perceived *intra-culturally* as positive moves to develop and show rapport, whereas in inter-cultural interaction, with the Californian speakers, they are perceived negatively as aggressiveness. After repeated encounters, these misjudgments (which may have been triggered by pre-existing expectations engendered by the stereotype or simply by mis-interpretation of the style itself) become «calcified by the conviction of repeated experience» (Tannen 1979:161 quoted in Saville-Troike op. cit.: 196). In other words «stereotypic expectations may well become self-fulfilling prophecies» (Saville-Troike loc. cit.).

⁸ Cf. Singer 1987: 20ff on belief systems and the contrasting disbelief systems [developed from Rokeach (1975)]. A *belief system* is the «totality of perceptions, attitudes, values, needs and identities». *Attitudes* «are likes and dislikes: They are our affinities for and our aversion to situations, objects, persons, groups, or any other identifiable aspect of our environment, including abstract ideas and social policies... our likes and dislikes have roots in our emotions, in our behavior, and in the social influences upon us» (D.J. Bem quoted in Singer 1987: 20). Not only specific attitudes but also an attitudinal framework is taught by a group to its members and through it «we can evaluate all new stimuli that reach our sensory receptors». They become «an integral part of our censor screen and our decoding mechanism» (Singer 1987: 20). They direct our perceptions and our judgements of stimuli, including of course, acts of communication. *Values* are «the desired events or situations we would like to see happen. ... our desires, wants, *needs* or *goals*» (my emphasis) (op cit., 21). «Whatever we call them – needs, values, goals – the fact is that every individual and group has them. Some individuals and groups may have different values from other individuals and groups or they may have them in different proportions and/or they may rank them differently...» (op. cit., 24). Apart from the basic animal needs for survival, to which we must first attend, as a complex social animal there are other needs to which we must also attend. Among these «Psychologists would argue that we *need* to ... give and receive affection...» (op. cit., 24-5). A.H. Maslow (1962) referred to in Singer

and consequently (assuming a link of some sort), their discourse styles.⁹ To make matters worse, these are usually below conscious awareness, i.e. they are felt to be 'natural', i.e. considered to be universally valid: the 'best' and 'only' way of doing things, by those who hold them most typically by monolinguals (see also Hawkins 1984).¹⁰ It would seem important then to attempt to

1987: 25, posits a hierarchy of needs, and «it is clear that we try to fulfill several or all of them simultaneously. When these are not compatible simultaneously we compromise by prioritizing or ranking them, but we cannot usually simultaneously achieve all our need or goals simultaneously. Needs may be conscious or unconscious, salient or latent. Most importantly (beyond the basic animal needs), whatever our needs or values, or how we rank them, what they are and how they are ranked are learned from the groups with which we identify. We are taught which values we *ought* to hold by each of our groups. What is more we are also taught in *what ways it is acceptable to go about satisfying those desires and in what ways it is not*» (my emphasis). «Values are the cognitive representation not only of individual needs but also of societal and institutional demands. They are the joint results of sociological as well as psychological forces acting upon the individual...» (Rokeach 1975: 20).

⁹ I do, obviously, assume that language and culture are connected. Not only in that language and social action reflect culture (and ideology) but that they (i.e. linguistic and social interaction) also somehow construct or constitute it. See various approaches illustrated in Duranti & Goodwin 1992 (Eds.), in particular Gumperz (1992: 230), Goodwin & Goodwin (1992: 149), who «view actors as not simply embedded within context, but actively involved in the process of building context through intricate collaborative articulation of the events they are engaged in» (from the Editors' introduction). See also Lee (1994); and see also the work of (among their acknowledged precursors) Vološinov (1929) and Kress (1993). See also Katan 1995, who also refers to Halliday 1985, 1990. We seem to be, happily, indeed, in the fullness of a neo-Sapir-Whorfian revival, and not just on this side of the Atlantic.

¹⁰ Cf. There are, moreover, what Rokeach refers to as *primitive, central, intermediate* and *peripheral* beliefs, varying in saliency and more importantly in depth of conviction as to their 'naturalness' as I have called it here. «According to Rokeach these 'primitive beliefs' have to do with the definition of a person's physical world, his or her social world, and feelings about self. *These are the beliefs that are so basic that the individual believes that every other human holds them.* Because they are so basic they are probably less susceptible to change. And they are of course the range of beliefs which makes intercultural communication so difficult» [Singer 1987: 28, (highlighting mine)]. Intermediate beliefs are predicated on reference to some *authority* (any source of information or of checking information), and peripheral or more specific beliefs are derived from intermediate beliefs (and might include our opinions). These are the most subject to change. Some individuals, and maybe some groups or cultures could be so defined, are more *open* or *closed* in their perceptions and interpretations. The more they depend on the authority of the source of the information to determine their attitude to that information, the more closed they are. An individual from a group which is more open-minded in their belief system will be much more likely to

'denaturalize' what is felt to be natural in a given culture, expose the commonplaces, the local as opposed to universal values and assumptions (assuming there are any),¹¹ and thence explain the generation of negative or skewed stereotypes when mismatched systems of values, beliefs, needs, assumptions, attitudes, interpretation processes and discourse styles, etc., meet, or rather, clash.

Cultures may (in part, at least) indeed be usefully seen as semiotic systems (Lotman 1990, Geertz 1983, Robinson 1988). One may thus envisage the conflict as issuing from the fact that, given two accidentally surface-identical elements from two different systems, an element from one local system is misread or assigned inappropriate value if seen from the perspective of the other. However, in as much as: (a) cultures do not seem to encode precise and predictable messages (in this they are not codes in the strict sense), but rather (through rites, customs, myths, belief systems, values, sedimented practices etc.) they may be said to focus attention in certain directions, or help to impose some structure on experience (Sperber & Wilson 1986), or one might say they provide *resources* for interpretation as well as for production (Erikson 1982); and in as much as (b) any act of communication is embedded in, and constitutes the local culture (Duranti & Goodwin 1992 *passim*), ideology and local situation (see e.g. Kress 1993, Lee 1994: x, 19); and (c) communication and understanding is not only (if it is at all) a question of decoding a message, but also (rather) a question of inference (Sperber & Wilson 1986),¹² and of judgement of truth acceptability (if I under-

try to understand another individual or group with a different belief system. People from more open cultures will/should be more open to others. But any way, except for relatively few individuals, the two cultures I shall be describing do not distinguish themselves for open-mindedness. «Mind opening» is however what I also mean in part by metacommunicative awareness raising although it also implies tolerance of difference, a higher goal than mere awareness of difference.

¹¹ Even if there aren't (an age-old debate) we can still hope to ameliorate intercultural communication by gaining at least some awareness of another's *Weltanschauung* (see also Singer's 1987 introduction).

¹² It is true that a language is a code which pairs phonetic and semantic representations of sentences. However, there is a gap between the semantic representations of sentences and the thoughts actually communicated by utterances. This gap is filled not by more coding but by inference. Moreover, there is an alternative to the code model of communication. Communication may be described as a «process of inferential recognition of the communicator's intentions» (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 9). Gumperz (1992) also makes many relevant

stand Parret 1980 correctly); and, finally, (d) that «any conceptually represented information available to the addressee can be used as a premise in this inference process» (Sperber & Wilson 1986b:65) – then it follows that different cultures may also probably use inference (non-demonstrative, i.e. non-deductive inference anyway¹³) differently in interpretation.

Interpretation of discourse *may* be a question, then, not so much of matching codes or reconstructing or decoding a 'message', but perhaps can be seen as the matching of inferential processes and their outcomes: i.e. of matching the ways which serve to point interactants in the right direction in their perceptions and interpretations of each other's intentions. With all due caution, it might be worth asking: do all cultures use premises and implicatures in the same way? Do all base their inference process on the assumption of an underlying Cooperative Principle (see Grice e.g. 1975) or even on one of Relevance? On (only slightly) less difficult ground, how directly or indirectly do speakers from different cultures typically convey their intentions? How many inferential steps are non-exceptionally expected of interaction partners, and, finally, just how much context dependence is again non-exceptionally assumed appropriate/ permissible? These last questions are fundamental and I cannot presume to even begin to treat them adequately. What I can do here, however, is by posing them sow the seed of doubt.

points: «The notion of contextualization must be understood with reference to a theory of interpretation which rests on the following basic assumptions: 1. Situated interpretation of any utterance is always a matter of inferences made within the context of an interactive exchange, the nature of which is constrained both by what is said and by how it is interpreted. 2. Inferencing, as Sperber and Wilson (1986), Levinson (1987) and others have noted, is presupposition-based and therefore suggestive, not assertive. It involves hypothesis-like tentative assessments of communicative intent, that is, the listener's interpretation of what the speaker seeks to convey, in roughly illocutionary terms. These assessments can be validated only in relation to other background assumptions, and not in terms of absolute truth value. 3. Although such background assumptions build on extralinguistic 'knowledge of the world', in any one conversation this knowledge is reinterpreted as part of the process of conversing so that it is interactively, thus ultimately socially, constructed...» (Gumperz 1992: 230).

¹³ «Even under the best of circumstances [...] communication may fail. The addressee can neither decode nor deduce the communicator's communicative intention. The best he can do is construct an assumption on the basis of evidence provided by the communicator's ostensive behaviour. For such an assumption there may be confirmation but no proof» (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 65).

1.2. Next (to spell out a consequence of what has been said so far of interpretation), I assume that communication involves not only the hearer's *uptake* (to use Austin's term), or interpretation of speaker intentions, but also importantly the fulfilling of *hearer* intentions, needs or goals. Discourse meaning is not necessarily 'personalist', i.e. identifiable merely with speaker intention, but may also be seen to be a joint product, negotiated between interlocutors (see e.g. Vološinov, 1929; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; and The Pixi Project¹⁴). And to connect this point with that in the previous paragraph, where does the responsibility for meaning ordinarily lie? With the speaker or the hearer? (see also Hinds 1987).

1.3. Furthermore, needs and intentions or judgements and desires (see also Parret 1980) are not only to be seen in propositional, 'ideational' or cognitive terms, but also, crucially, in terms of speaker/hearer rapport or the convergence of interpersonal affective goals. In other words, communicative success may be measured both in terms of its informational or cognitive effects and its rapport or affective ones (see Aston 1988; Vincent-Marrelli 1988). A speaker may have several possible simultaneous or lateral goals (see e.g. Parisi & Castelfranchi 1984); discourse analysis indeed regularly now distinguish between what are termed 'transactional' and 'interactional goals' (see Brown & Yule 1983).¹⁵ A given hearer may thus be spoken of being deceived, or when it is unintentional, mistaken, on one or both or neither dimension.

So, for the moment, while «lying while saying the truth» was defined by us (Vincent & Castelfranchi 1977, see also in this volume) as concerning cognitive referential meaning and inferential steps, I am now considering parallel goals from different dimensions rather than hierarchially structured ones reached through

¹⁴ See e.g. Aston ed. (1988). Pixi is an acronym for Pragmatics of Italian-English X-cultural Interaction, an inter-university research project financed (1983-1988) by the Italian Ministry of Education (fondo 40%), investigating service encounters in Italian and British bookshops. See also Zorzi-Calò (1990), Ciliberti (1993), George (1992), and Vincent-Marrelli (1995).

¹⁵ See e.g. Aston 1988, for a useful review of the various traditions (from Jakobson, Bühler, Halliday, Widdowson) concerning the different functions of language, in particular this ideational/informational vs interpersonal/emotional distinction. See also Tannen's report vs rapport talk (1991). As we saw earlier in note (7), psychologists also recognize these as needs, or values.

inference along a single dimension. Inference is, of course, presumably involved, but I am stressing that it is also based very centrally on shared socio-cultural context, assumptions concerning values and feelings and such things as conventional face saving and politeness strategies (see e.g. Brown & Levinson 1978), rather than merely on assumptions concerning sharing of facts.

1.4. So another basic premise is that, as Singer (1987) puts it: «so much of human behavior is geared toward satisfying those needs, goals, and or desires. Thus we interpret situations and relations with other people and groups in terms of trying to satisfy those needs and values. Having needs and values we try to fulfill them» (op. cit.: 26). In order to do this we manipulate and/or structure our environment (including other people and groups). This 'political' behaviour of exerting power or of influencing others for our ends is achieved mainly through ostensive linguistic behaviour which, let me now bring together various points made so far, intercats together with the background or context (Duranti & Goodwin 1992) a generalized relevance principle (Sperber & Wilson 1986) and the human cognitive processing system to give interlocutors access through inference to each others intentions and attitudes. Perlocutionary effects (consequences or whether an intention worked or a goals was achieved) will depend on the individuals involved (whether they trust each other, what their power relationship is/was, whether one is prepared to adopt another's goal etc), but will also depend on the correct matching of local practices for inference and judgment.

1.5. I am working with a definition of speaker sincerity¹⁶ which recites something like: speaker x is sincere when x has the ultima-

¹⁶ Hearer sincerity, and the question of the joint negotiation of meaning or even of the distribution of intentionality during an interaction would be well worth focussing on too, although I can only hint at it here by suggesting that it may be a useful notion to introduce. Sometimes (at least in some cultural/discourse styles) it seems that a speaker's role is taken by hearers as being merely to suggest a topic or propose some propositional content and the hearer is basically free to play with it and define its meaning and the speaker's intentions, and also because of this indefiniteness or indeterminacy is able to pretend that s/he did not recognize (interpret) the speaker's probable intentions. To give a brief example pertinent here: I regularly phone in my orders to my local greengrocer's «mandatemi una testa d'aglio» («please send me a/one head of garlic»). Almost invariably he sends me two, unless I remember to say «vorrei una testa d'aglio, una

te goal to get hearer y to assume something q which x assents to, i.e. which x believes x believes, and x does this through the intermediate goal of communicating his intent to communicate that x believes q.¹⁷ Perception of sincerity (and the recovery of a speaker's communicative intent) also involves, very centrally, the assumption that a speaker is assuming that what he intends to convey is relevant to the hearer.¹⁸ When someone communicates, s/he has the goal or intention of altering the cognitive environment of his addressee (Castelfranchi & Parisi 1984, Sperber & Wilson 1986: 46), the goal of affecting their thought processes, but also, as I have said, of affecting their affective state (see Aston 1988).

1.6. So, in looking for answers as to how the particular stereotypes concerning others-from-other-group's trustworthiness, and sincerity, may be generated in intercultural contact (when the participants are unaware of the nature of the possible danger), I am also addressing the question of whether truth, trustworthiness, sincerity, honesty (these are not necessarily synonymous) are to be considered universal concepts. And as we shall see they are intimately connected to our judgments of other's goodwill, solidarity, cooperativeness, politeness and face; this social or inter-affective aspect of communication is enmeshed with the inter-cognitive aspect (see also Vincent 1989). Furthermore, (and this next connection is not found in the literature, as far as I can see) they are connected to perception of intelligence, gullibility, naivety, and adaptability. Cross-cultural differences may appear, I suggest, in that interactants' mutual expectations of how much trust is to

di numero». Is he, as a hearer, being sincere or not? My answer would be similar to my discussion here, so for obvious reasons I cannot go into it (but see Vincent-Marrelli 1994 for some connected issues).

¹⁷ Cf., *mutatis mutandis*, Vincent & Castelfranchi 1981, Castelfranchi & Vincent (this volume), Parret ed. 1993 *passim*; see also Sperber & Wilson 1986: 38-64 on communicative intent, the relevance principle and ostensive-inferential communication.

¹⁸ If you assume that human cognition is relevance oriented then you can understand how, as a result, someone who knows (or thinks he knows) an individual's cognitive environment can infer which assumptions his hearer is likely to entertain. An individual's cognitive environment is a set of assumptions available to him. Which particular assumptions is he most likely to construct and entertain? There is a single property which makes information worth processing for a human being, and that is relevance (liberally cribbed from Sperber & Wilson 1986: 46). It maximizes the efficiency of processing. It enables the recovery of both old (i.e. encyclopaedic) and new contextual information.

be by default assumed or worked with and how many inferential steps (how many 'bridging implicatures') are expected of one's interactants,¹⁹ or in other words, as mentioned earlier, where does the 'responsability' for ultimate meaning lie?

1.7. It is now a commonplace in contrastive discourse pragmatics that different language/cultures focus or give priority in linguistic interaction in different situations to different functions or goals (see e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1987: 49; Tannen 1985), just as written texts are classified generically according to their functional priority, and that this is reflected in many ways in their formal characteristics (those that allow us to distinguish one genre from another).²⁰ So, too, I suggest, can cultures be distinguished according to their general preference for one or other dimension of functional priority. As Scollon & Scollon 1981 put it, discourse styles have emerged as the result of negotiating, in interaction, different values and different face variables.

I assume too, naturally, that within a given culture, members or interactants will not necessarily share all priorities and belief systems, values, attitudinal, or frameworks, but that they will share, crucially, at least knowledge of what is conventionally prioritarian, believed, preferred, etc. «a matter not of personal belief but of other oriented assessment» (Erikson 1982).

When there are such mutual assumptions, then the sort of misperception, misconstrual or misattribution²¹ I am referring to, will be less likely to occur.

2. *Two exemplary cultural styles*

In order to gain some systematicity and clarity of exposition in which to verse my tentative explanation of how it is that

¹⁹ I may, thus, be questioning Wilson & Sperber's thesis that we need no other explanatory principle of the interpretation process than that of Relevance, in particular that we do not need any principle based on assumptions of truthfulness. However, I have not thought this through enough yet to dare affirm it, especially since their reasoning seems particularly convincing.

Brown & Levinson 1978: 63, also seem to be implying that not only information but also at least rapport is involved in inference: «linguistic strategies» are «*means* satisfying communicative and face-oriented *ends*, in a strictly formal system of rational 'practical reasoning'».

²⁰ For a clear overview of different views of genre see Swales (1990).

²¹ Cf. e.g. Ehrenhaus (1983) and Robinson (1988) on attribution theory.

truthfulness and honesty may have a culturally specific locus or how sincerity may be culturally defined, I have idealized two diametrically opposed cultural types.²² I shall refer to each type under the general labels Low Context (LC) Culture and High Context (HC) Culture, because the concept (borrowed from the anthropologist E.T. Hall 1976) can be seen to subsume many of the relevant points I want to make, and it seems to provide a useful link to the model of interpretation I have mentioned and with which I am working. It refers both to the amount of assumed mutual social dependence and assumed sharing of assumptions by same-matrix-culture members in interaction, and thus also to the amount of context dependence in the information load and structure of messages – the HC being typically implicit (or context sensitive), the LC typically assuming less contextual sharing and being thus more explicit (or context independent) in information structure (see Hall 1976, Ehrenhaus 1983, Gudykunst 1990).

Need I say, that in reality no one specific culture exists solely at one end or other of what is in fact a continuum (Hall 1976) from High to Mid to Low context. However, it is also true that cultures will be more or less one type or the other. What is most relevant to us here is that any two given cultures in contact will be relatively more one or the other relative to each other.²³

²² No more so, however, than permitted by the many hints to be found in various fields and disciplines. I am simply drawing together what I see as connectable loose threads and showing plausible, I hope, links between insights from various quarters. Indeed, *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, [see Allum 1975, (from Toennies) Goerge 1990], interdependence/collectivism vs independence/individualism (see e.g. Schwarz 1990, Vincent 1989), orality/literacy (see Tannen, Goody & Watt etc.), positive politeness/negative politeness (Brown & Levinson 1978), and others have been variously correlated together in varying combinations with (or without) the HC/LC distinction by different authors (e.g. Gudykunst 1990, Tannen 1982, Wierzbicka 1990), but none, as far as I can see, have so far attempted to provide a full synthesis of the possible correlations and to connect this to discourse style [but see Vincent-Marrelli 1989, and 1995 for a (foolhardy) start].

²³ Indeed, English discourse style has been described as more or less one or the other on some of the correlates, depending on which particular other culture it was being compared to [e.g. Athabaskan (Scollon & Scollon), Polish (Wierzbicka) Hebrew (Blum-Kulka), Italian (Vincent 1989, George 1991)]. And, even varieties of English have been compared on some of these dimensions, e.g. Australian vs American (Wierzbicka 1986; Renwick, 1983), not surprisingly considering that «the process of colonisation has made of English one of the most varied languages ever to have existed. Each of the countries that have adopted English as a major medium of communication has imprinted its own character on the language» (Lee 1994: 154).

This is a prototypical characterization then, with all the implicit scope for intracategorical variation.²⁴

Let me try now to use these various premises to develop my points.

2.1. Low Context Cultures and the literal truth presumption

There are cultures where it seems that it is natural (i.e. it is the prevailing folk ethnology or local theory of language and social action, i.e. of interpretation) to identify meaning with speaker intention, speaker sincerity with literal truth saying and linguistic interaction as primarily concerned with information transfer, or transaction. So sincerity and cooperativeness seem to be judged on the basis of a speaker's willingness to be explicit, direct, overt in the conveying of information.²⁵ Speaker's trustwor-

²⁴ Particular nations, societies, cultures, will have native (not to mention non-native immigrant or native ethnic minority groups) sub-cultures and groups within them, with their own relative positions on the continuum and relative to the others. Furthermore, every individual will find that in her or his communicative repertoire, i.e. in the resources she/he has for normally explicating her different roles and for interacting in different relationships with differing degrees of familiarity and assumed sharing of presuppositions and values, then s/he will also naturally assume different cultural personae and consequently different code types. As Singer (1987: 20, 22-24) puts it s/he will also hold different group identities and these will also moreover be ranked differently individually, the corresponding sets of values will thus come into play on different occasions of interaction with the various groups identified with. Even if an individual's repertoire contains potentially conflicting frameworks these are usually not in conflict at any given time since they would be conjured up in different contexts (Singer 87: 20). However, I wish to submit, that no two repertoires from individuals from different types would ever extend as far as the focal point of the opposing pole or category (to use a notion from fuzzy logic and from Rosch Heider's natural kinds theory), just as two neighbouring basic category focuses never overlap, although their boundaries may (see Berlin & Kay 1969, Vincent-Marrelli 1986, Kay & McDaniel 1978). If their focal points or prototype loci did, then it would no longer make sense to talk of two distinguishable categories [albeit fuzzy ones (see e.g. Lakoff 1971)]. And, as I hope to convince you, it does make sense to posit them here because they seem to yield some useful explanations.

²⁵ In a more formal treatment it would be important to distinguish carefully, thought it is not at all simple, between the different «ways in which what is communicated goes beyond what is said» (Akmajian et al. 1990). Throughout the years terms as *non-literal*, *indirect*, *implicit*, *implied*, *conveyed*, (even sometimes) *presupposed*, have been used almost as if they were synonymous. Recently this is being tidied up to some degree (within pragmatics), but is still not clear (to me anyway), nor, as far as I can see, is it universally consistently applied owing to the same terms being used across a variety of not quite compatible approaches.

thiness is identified also typically with the 'keeping of one's word', as if by sheer commitment and volition one can influence and be responsible for future reality.

Commonplaces of this prototypical cultural type are reflected in expressions such as 'always keep a promise' or 'never give your word lightly' or 'an x's word is his bond'.²⁶ Or, to put it differently, we have the «location of the real in the *logos*» (see Tyler 1981: 249); also typical is 'we say what we mean and we mean what we say' (see also Vincent 1989: 48). Lying is identified with 'giving off false information'. Withholding or being silent (i.e. not using words) about relevant true information is considered less morally

I shall try to use the following at least consistently in this way. *Non-literal* = «something *other* than what our words mean» [This is now used to denote such *other* things as e.g. irony, metaphor, exaggeration (see Akmajian et al.: 1990: 322)]. *Literal* (also usefully opposed to *conveyed* meaning) is also usefully retained as «what is said», the propositional, or locutionary, or surface meaning. *Indirect* = «something *more* than what we mean directly» (Akmajian et al., op. cit.: 326): performing one illocutionary act by means of another (e.g. an assertive meant as a directive). However, I also use it more generally following the Brown & Levinson *off-record* use, for e.g. (see note 28 below).

I also use *conveyed* (said of meaning) in the proto-pragmatics most general sense (faithful to G. Lakoff's early usage), as opposed to 'literal': i.e. what is said vs. what is meant and what is taken to be meant; and *implicit* (*vs explicit*) as an undefined general reference to what is left unsaid (perhaps a presupposition?), but is nonetheless communicated in the right conditions. It is also often shared contextual knowledge (as in Hall's High Context Code). An *implication* is something that has been communicated implicitly. *Implicature* I take as a more technical term/notion although Akmajian et al's glossary defines it generally (and unhelpfully I think) as «The act of communicating one thing while saying another». Gricean conversational implicature, of course, is: meaning which is implied (or implicated) «by virtue of the fact that speaker and hearer are cooperatively contributing to a conversation» (op. cit., 344).

(*Pragmatic presuppositions* are *states* not acts [although one can intentionally (though not necessarily communicatively) convey a presupposition]. Like semantic presupposition both a sentence and its negation have the same presupposition. Different phenomena are subsumed by different authors – but they all seem to concern assumptions about the speech context, about appropriateness or felicity conditions in the context for utterances and about assumed shared knowledge. egs. 1. *Sam does not realize Irv is a Martian* (*Irv is a Martian*). 2. *John accused Harry of writing the letter* (*There was something blameworthy about writing the letter*). 3. *Was it Margaret that Paul married?* (*Paul married someone*). I talk both of presuppositions and implications as being *embedded* in vehicle assertions.

Inference is the process which derives what is meant [from what is said + the context (in the widest possible sense)]. *Inferences* may be *invited* more or less directly or explicitly.

²⁶ The very metaphor used, «giving one's word», is revealing of the underlying local theory (see Lakoff & Johnson 1989).

wrong: 'we never lie but we occasionally suppress the truth'.²⁷ New information is highly respected as being valuable, but it is also part of the local politeness ethos that it be considered «free goods», in other words that it is also rude, impolite i.e. non-solidary as well as deceptive, to not straightforwardly share it, when it is requested (or obviously probably relevant), or to expect one's hearer to work hard inferentially to get at it, i.e. by only hinting or by being ambiguous (cf. Blum-Kulka 1987); 'Hints',²⁸

²⁷ This was once actually said to me (although I must admit auto-ironically), during an informal chat about international relations and diplomacy, by a very senior British diplomat. 'Machiavellianism' or negatively loaded deviousness is often imputed to Italians by the British; to turn this round, though, these may indeed be truly Machiavellian in that they are not hypocritical about being deceptive. They admit, for example, that lying by *ommission* [see Castelfranchi & Vincent (1977, in this volume), Chisholm & Feehan 1977: 143-146, and Vincent 1982: 345] is just as deceptive as lying by *commission*: hence one of their judgements, perceptions and stereotypes of the English 'hypocrisy'. Another comes, for example, from their seeing many 'negative politeness' strategies, when expressed, for example, in conventionalized indirectness of requests, as hypocritical.

The term 'Machiavellian', by the way, is now undergoing some 'neutralization' attempts, by academic circles at least, where it is being used, although with some playfulness, as synonymous with strategic thinking (see, especially Byrne & Whiten 1988). For the history of British attitudes to Machiavelli himself see for e.g. Praz (1942), and George Bull's introduction to the 1962 Penguin Edition of Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

²⁸ Hinting is an indirect or «off-record» communicative strategy. See Brown & Levinson (1978: 216 ff) on «off-record» strategies in communicative acts, i.e. ones to which it is not «possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention» (op. cit., 216). It is left up to the hearer to «decide how to interpret it». The Hearer «must make some inference to recover what was in fact intended. The actual processes that lie behind the comprehension (and thus the production) of indirection in language are not well understood. Essentially, though, what is involved is a two-stage process: (i) a *trigger* serves notice to the addressee that some inference must be made. (ii) Some mode of *inference* derives what is meant (intended) from what is actually said, this last providing a sufficient *clue* for the inference. A very plausible candidate for the trigger is some violation of a Gricean Maxim. But what kind of inference is involved is a matter of contention. G. Lakoff (1975) favours semantic entailment; Searle (1975) favours inductive reasoning; Atlas and Levinson (1973) favour practical reasoning as used in this paper. Part of what is involved is what *premises* are actually made use of to make the inference. We believe that a crucial premise will be the reconstructed motive that led [the speaker] to be indirect in the first place, and amongst such motives face preservation is perhaps the most important» (op. cit., 216-217). Hinting is one of various indirect strategies which may be used to do a Face Threatening Act «off record», of the kind which involves «inviting conversational implicatures» through violation of the Relevance Maxim (Grice's). «Many cases of truly indirect (off-record) speech acts are accomplished by hints which consist in 'raising the issue' of some desired act A_x for instance, by stating motives or reasons for doing A» (highlighting mine).

as indeed 'rhetoric', are classified negatively in that culture type as 'slyness', or 'deviousness', and/or impolite [contrary to the Leechian (1983: 108) assumption that politeness is a function of indirectness; cf. Blum-Kulka (1987)]. The use of metaphors,²⁹ proverbs, similes, rhymes in appropriate contexts may be highly valued in some societies³⁰ but not in this one where literalness and/or «directness» is the valued style» (Saville Troike 1989: 187); both their allusive vagueness and their status as 'cliché' cause them to be disdained (see also Vincent Marrelli (1990) on the 'Plain' English ethos). Indirectness, in this culture, may, however, be seen to be connected to politeness if one considers it on the interpersonal level (i.e. non-information linked). With requests, for example, i.e. impositions on the interpersonal level, one is indirect if one wants to be polite. So we seem to have preference for directness with information, and preference of indirectness with affect.³¹

²⁹ The use of metaphor is also classed by Brown & Levinson (1978) among possible indirect strategies which invite conversational implicatures, through violation of the Gricean Quality (or truthfulness) Maxim.

³⁰ They are characteristic of so-called 'oral' societies (as opposed to literate societies) (see e.g. Tannen 1980, Olson & Torrance 1991). Their positive status may survive in many contexts in newly literate or not-universally literate societies. Or the oral medium may be preferred for certain social functions over the written one (e.g. the telephone is widely preferred in S. Italy, in a wide variety of interpersonal relationship contexts) for invitations, congratulations, condolences, leave-takings, greetings after-having-been-away or before-going-away ('saluti' of all sorts), situations where in S. England, for example, most people would send a card, often a ready-made, commercially available one at that (with only the signature being personalized). In the 'written' society, personal rapport may often be preferably achieved without disturbing or impinging on one's addressee (as telephone calls might), it also allows distance to be maintained thus safeguarding one's own privacy.

³¹ This characterizes, indeed, so called, 'negative politeness' as opposed to 'positive politeness' (Brown & Levinson 1978). Politeness strategies combine redressive action, that is caring for one's interlocutor's face wants (their negative and positive face wants respectively) while doing an 'on record' potentially Face Threatening Act of some sort (see their schema op. cit., 74). «Face» is the «public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects: (a) *negative face*: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition, (b) *positive face*: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants...» (op. cit., 66); also restated as «*negative face*: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by other; *positive face*: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others [op. cit., 67] [...] not just by anyone, but anyone, but by some particular others

2.2. High Context cultures and truth of mood

There are other cultures which seem to operate (at least some of the time, or they have salient sub-groups which tend to operate most of the time) with different, even diametrically opposed, local theories of social action and meaning, which seemingly give priority, for example, to the interpersonal, non-informational or non-transactional function of language. Ethnographers of language are increasingly coming up with data which cannot be explained or analyzed sensibly, I submit, by having recourse to the previously described type of cultural style, which, incidentally, also seems to coincide with a theoretical descriptive paradigm of meaning and communication which has been popular for a long time.

To accentuate and polarize the differences with the first mentioned cultural type: here, indirectness with information may be common, accepted event prized and appreciated.³² While, on the contrary, directness with affect may be valued. Truth value may be properly assignable only to the illocutionary level or to even further removed levels of conveyed meaning usually with affective intent and effect. Glaringly literally false affirmations are ignored if there is «*truth of mood*» as E.M. Forster (in *Passage to India*) so beautifully put is (see also George 1984, Aston 1988). As Tyler: (1981: 249) relates, to replace *ethos* and *pathos* by *logos*: «was to replace honesty by truth». Moreover, direct, overt expression of truth may be seen as 'over fussy',³³ 'taking the fun out of things'; indeed, 'candour' and or disclosure often even give rise to suspi-

especially relevant to the particular goals, etc.» (op. cit., 68). Among the *positive politeness* strategies are to be found: claiming common ground, noticing or attending to others (their wants, desires, needs, goods), exaggerate (your interest, approval, sympathy with other), intensifying interest, using ingroup identity markers, seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement, presupposing/raising/asserting common ground, joking, asserting or presupposing your knowledge of and concern for other's wants, offering, promising, etc. (see op. cit. 106-133). Of course to do this is to assume/presume one is in the set of persons who are allowed to do this (and the definition and width of this set will vary cross-culturally). To misjudge this may cause serious affront (see Vincent-Marrelli 1989 for this in British/Italian interaction) even within a relatively HC society, where certainly there is anyway a distinction to be made between behaviour with ingroup and out-group interlocutors (see Schwarz 1990).

³² Saville-Troike (1989: 193) on Japanese (quoting Kawashima 1979) reports «lack of clarity and definition is accepted; that the meanings of terms are unclear, unlimited, and unfixed is considered natural and even desirable».

³³ See Vincent-Marrelli (1994) on S. Italian (stereotype and) perception of British 'fussiness'.

cion; they are considered unwise, they are therefore unexpected, and they may be perceived as probably hypocritical (compare also Wierzbicka's (1990: 115ff) remarks). Certainly protestations of sincerity are often deeply mistrusted, and one prides oneself on not being gullible. Intelligence seems to be defined in part as not being gullible ('*who do you think you're kidding? We're not wet around the ears here, you know*', or some such equivalent phrase). Directness itself may in part be felt as an insult to intelligence, or to other's feelings (and therefore non-solidary). Indirection is also valued as a solidarity marker because it recognizes one's interlocutors' intelligence³⁴ and allows them space to make their own interpretation; it does not furthermore assume that there is a God-given truth (it does not subsume a 'realist' or 'personalist' theory of meaning), nor impose one's personal view of truth on another. Indeed to these cynics, reality is unstable. How can one sustain the truth of anything? How can one be expected to be held responsible for future events if the future is itself beyond one's control? Real promises and invitations etc. (as opposed to the conventional mere tokens of solidarity) typically need to be reiterated and confirmed right up until the relevant moment (Vincent 1989, George 1991). In this latter culture type

³⁴ See, e.g., also Ervin-Tripp 1987: 47. Her example and explanation, however, that the maxim of truthfulness may perhaps be over-ridden by one «Don't appear to be stupid or ill-informed» should also be expanded into «Don't make another seem stupid or ill-informed». Furthermore when she says: «It is perhaps because of the threat to face in soliciting information of which the respondent might be ignorant that many languages have methods to avoid presupposing knowledge and thus forcing people without information to appear stupid or ill-informed. Instead of *Where is Dozing Hall?* we say *Do you know where Dozing Hall is?*», she is quite right, but only up to a point again: it is just as possible to say, following her premise [that people don't want to seem stupid and (if cooperative) will not want others to look stupid] that we ask precisely: *Dov'è la stazione*, or *Dov'è la stanza del Prof. Tal dei Tali*, or even just *Prof. Tal dei Tali?*, *La biglietteria?* ecc.; as indeed seems to happen a great deal in Naples on the street, in University corridors, etc. between at least students, and youngish peers, as well as between and from non-bourgeois Neapolitans (obviously when the context of situation is appropriate). To ask whether someone knows is to presume they may not know, after all. To ask straight out for directions is to assume that they are in the know and therefore to flatter their positive face (it also assumes ingroupness). The type of face preference may well have something to do with how this (otherwise extremely valid insight of Ervin-Tripp's) actually works: i.e. whether presuming people do know is better than presuming they might not know in the context of different presumptions of face preference (negative or positive). Could it be that even Ervin-Tripp is making an ethno-centric slip?

(HC), non-imposition (i.e. negative politeness, or not going 'on record'), concerns information. In the other cultural type prototypically described above (LC), it is non-imposition of involvement or rapport with other which generates politeness. Negative politeness as non-imposition may thus, I submit, be retained perhaps, as a universal definition, but what it concerns will vary culture specifically. Indirectness also, generally, carries a premium of affect, «a convergence of rapport» (according to Aton 1988, after Wilson & Sperber 1986), in that it can be seen as the only rational reason for the higher expenditure of effort in processing.

In HC, *ulterior motives* are usually/always assumed for any utterance; an interlocutor's (typically from the polar-opposite cultural type) protestations of face-value-meaning-only being meant are always suspicious and can therefore generate the cross-cultural perception of hypocrisy.³⁵ In these societies, furthermore, interaction is best described by means of a theory of joint negotiation³⁶ of meaning, where meaning might be attributed by one's interlocutor's response, both cognitive and affective, as often discernible by their next move and which then determines one's own next move (and the retrospective attribution of specific meaning to one's own move), as much as by the speaker's intentions³⁷ (we might with caution say that here consequences and perlocutionary effects are attended to as much as locutionary and illocutionary force). A speaker and hearer operate with, and indeed often play with, *potential* rather than predetermined fixed meanings and/or force.³⁸

³⁵ Italian readers will readily think of the national sport of «dietrologia» (what-Lies-behind/ulterior-motives-logy) (especially typical of politicians and journalists but by no means restricted to them).

³⁶ My use of negotiation of meaning is obviously different to that of Simons et al. (1993) (reported in Katan 1995) where it is in «loosely knit» (i.e. LC) societies (as opposed to «tightly woven» ones) that meanings need to be «established», they have to be negotiated. «They use the metaphor of the loom for a variety of purposes, not least of which to render the idea of a culture as a (relatively) finished product. Hence [in tightly woven societies], there is little change, meanings have already been established, while the loosely woven culture is still evolving...» (Katan 1995: 11).

³⁷ At least in some types of speech acts or routines which involve very centrally the manipulation of *potential* meanings, such as 'teasing' in S. Italy (see Vincent Marrelli 1994).

³⁸ This is true also of discourse in the other type of culture, but the point is that it is not normally assumed to be the case by the members themselves, whereas in this culture it is quite common for speakers to make meta-linguistic

Incidentally, I suppose I may be saying, among other things, that different research methods and theories of meaning (such as say, Speech Act Theory, Gricean pragmatics, Relevance theory pragmatics, Conversational Analysis, Radical Critical Discourse Analysis, etc.) may even be best seen as 'simulations' (in the Artificial Intelligence sense), or models of local theories of language and social action, none necessarily reflecting universal principles; each perhaps suited to describe or explain, i.e. 'simulate' a particular local practice. Speech Act Theory, for instance, is indeed, now accused of ethnocentricity (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1990: *passim*), not to mention conversational postulates (Ochs 1976) and Gricean maxims (see e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1987: 47).

To return to the directness/indirectness question, now. What some linguists call 'indirectness' or 'indirection', i.e. as needing *conversational* implicature or postulates, in other words as being a matter of *conversational* inference (e.g. '*I want... (milk)*' statements which supposedly 'indirectly' ask the hearer to do something for the speaker) might instead be seen (following Ervin-Tripp's 1987 argument) just as insightfully, perhaps, as 'direct' representations of the speaker's perspective, a direct expression of what is on his/her mind. Whether uttered with directive or merely expressive intent it would be fully functional in a society or group where it is assumed members are anxious to satisfy each others needs, and mutually expected to be so inclined. Lower degrees of mutual dependency and awareness (more LC) would induce requesting strategies which more directly or explicitly addressed what the speaker wanted the hearer to do (i.e. eg. get some milk for him). The most explicit/direct way would be a directive in the form of an imperative: 'Get me some milk'. Yet this does not appear in LC use, unless the intent is to humiliate or to be rude or in cases of extreme emergency which would waive normal politeness norms. Such an explicit directive assumes that one's hearer is obliged/expected to comply (and it is indeed common in HC S. Italy in the family, at least). What happens (in LC) is a complex compromise which provides some explicitness of expression of what one wants the other to do, but which also

comments to this effect, indicating their awareness of its naturalness to them. Only recently is theorizing by professionals unearthing this aspect for all talk, whereas it has long been readily and informally available among informants of this discourse style without the need for professional ratification.

seems to allow the other freedom of action (that is, communicates one's awareness that one must be heard to be allowing the other this freedom whether to comply or not). Brown & Levinson call this «conventional indirectness»³⁹ (eg. «Could you...»).

According to Ervin-Tripp (1987) then, so-called 'indirectness' far from being calculated Machiavellian deviousness is actually cognitively simpler. In her view, the view of indirectness as a planned means-end inferential path may be simply a reflection of 1. the ethnocentric, essentially Western positivist bias-and particular attitude to truth speaking, and 2. of the presupposition that if you want something from someone you must tell them straight or ask them explicitly because it would be rude to expect them to infer it from a presupposed condition of mutual compliance (since in that society there is none). She posits that compliance with simple «want» sentences may stem from practical inference or reasoning *from context* rather than from implicature or through Gricean conversational inference that sees interpretation starting with literal meaning and proceeding to selection of a speaker's probable intentions, and sees cooperativeness as the adopting of intentions or recognized speaker goals. According to her, language only *adds* to contextual information (and may not be necessary when context is unambiguous). The function of language is to specify, contradict or modify an interpretation which is already potential in the context. That of context is to frame the interpretation.

This fits well with Sperber & Wilson 1986 or Brown & Levinson 1978, because (as far as I can see) they see inference going from context towards contextually appropriate meaning, rather than in steps from literal meaning of an utterance towards the possible conveyed meaning. In the appropriate context, assuming that speakers are rational and relevance oriented, then any mention of

³⁹ In this strategy a speaker is faced with opposing tensions: the desire to give an 'out' by being indirect, and the desire to go on record (or be direct) (1978: 137). For Robin Lakoff (1973), among the first to address the politeness question, being direct, going on record, coming straight to the point, is a way of limiting imposition on another's time and attention, and is therefore more 'polite': since 'don't impose' is for her the most important aspect of politeness (she does also envisage that the norms might swap over in intimate situations and so is not totally mono-cultural in her thinking there). See also Blum-Kulka (1987) for the Israeli preference for straight-talk and the identification of indirectness with slyness.

a topic, any raising of the issue, embedded in whatever grammatical mood – e.g. (context/ Mother entering room where children are *fighting*) and says: *Must you fight? Are you fighting in here? Stop fighting! Why are you fighting? What's going on here*, or *simply just walks in and says nothing*, the result would be the same – they'd stop fighting (assuming they are obedient British children) or they'd interpret at least their mother's utterance as her wanting them to stop fighting. They'd take them all as directives or prohibitions («the presence of adults, quite simply, invokes adult-controlled behaviour», op. cit.: 52).

When one adds to this the centrality in some societies (HC) of not just attention to context, but also within context, attention to people's needs, then it is easy to see how expressing a want can easily engender a hearer's compulsion to satisfy it and this can be done intentionally or not but does not involve necessarily going through inferential steps from the other's utterance type, but simply practically (i.e. through practical reasoning) adjusting context to the benefit of one's partner, and not necessarily because they have recognised a speaker's communicative intent (the other may have not said anything at all).

According to Ervin-Tripp, all children (before language socialization) naturally do practical reasoning (e.g. they might open a door for their mother if she needs to go through it even if she hasn't asked). Some cultures, through socialization, then reinforce this use of practical reasoning based on attention to context and to people. In Japan, for example, (Clancy 1986: 217), they are trained to recognize practical inference *as* intention and to presume as a speaker «upon the listener's willingness to cooperate, empathize and intuit what he or she has in mind».

I have adapted Ervin-Tripp's points to my needs because this could equally well be said of the S. Italian communicative style: both Japan and S. Italy seem to be exponents of the HC culture type,⁴⁰ and both seem to have this presumption of interdependence of its members, and of the consequent use of context (whether or not through inferential steps derived from the literal meaning or form of an utterance or from 'practical reasoning' is a question for debate, as we have seen) to recover or construct others' intentions (or presumed wants). But I have also mentioned Ervin-

⁴⁰ Although with important differences concerning other cultural dimensions which I cannot go into here, but see Hofstede 1994 for an idea.

Tripp's points, because I also want to go further and point out that because practical reasoning is universal, there is no reason to believe we stop doing it when we start doing conversational inferencing from language (ie. distinguish reconstruction of others' communicative intentions from simply adjusting context to how we think it should go). Neapolitans, certainly, seem to be ready to work from context directly and from the merest hint of an issue or topic to construct or reconstruct a meaning. I say «reconstruct», because they are also ready to impute intentionality to any act; at some point there is training in this sense. When you know people (in your group) will feel socially obliged to attend to your wants, then you need only express these if you want them to understand that you are asking them to. The expressive, or the hint, becomes conventionally a directive/request, and obviously will not be able to be uttered innocently (and protestations of innocence will be suspect). At this point it may well be that *conversational implicature and inference* comes into it again, and not simply mutual obligations.

However, what does seem clear, when all is said and done, is that indirectness/directness (to also agree wholeheartedly with Wierzbicka 1990) needs to be much more carefully analysed (far beyond my scope here and abilities) before one can use it to make really acceptable contrastive observations.

3. *Three illustrative cases*⁴¹

Given the various elements I have informally discussed above, I hope it is fairly easy now to see how cross-cultural misperceptions in general and of in/sincerity in particular might arise, but let me just, as briefly as possible, discuss two sets of examples. The first (a single case), which I shall only skim through, illustrates I think the British/Italian difference in readiness of attribution of speaker intentions or illocutionary force through invited inference, the second set (a 'matched' pair of interactions) allows me to bring several aspects together and I shall deal with it in a little more detail.

⁴¹ I have time/space for no more since the detail involved in even an informal treatment is considerable (demonstrating the centrality and complexity of context in any analysis of talk).

3.1. Taping Hints

Francesca, a 16 year old teenager girl, who lives in our building here in Naples, and is friendly with my (older looking) 13 year old son Marco (although not particularly directly, but rather on the network of friends and relations, since she is the cousin of another older boy in the building who used to play with Marco in the courtyard when they were younger), on being told (typically generously) from Marco that we could copy her collection of home videos for her, because we had a double-deck VCR, for several days running popped down with a tape for Marco to copy for her and to pick up the one we'd already copied. It happened to coincide with a period when I was doing some editing work with video materials for my students and I had to reorganize my recording schedule around this and so was directly involved (usually actually doing the recording on behalf of Marco). After two or three times I began to feel a little annoyed, imposed upon, although I realised, suspected that the girl was actually simply responding to Marco, who (in his typical quite extreme HC style) must have been especially expansive as usual («don't worry, I'll take care of everything, it's no problem, etc. etc.»: «ci penso io»). She probably had no idea that I (the mother) was involved at all. One day when she come to pick up her tape Marco was not in and I happened to go to the door. I gave her the tape, she thanked me politely and I said: *«prego, non c'è problema, mi dispiace solo che la qualità è così brutta, sai il registratore non è granché»* («oh you're welcome, it's no problem, I'm just sorry that the quality is so bad, you know our VCR's not up too much»). She mumbled something like «oh that's all right, no its's fine» as she ran up the stairs. She never came back. I am still embarrassed at what I did, and still can't really believe it worked. As an originally LC type speaker I *was* saying what I thought was literally true (at least about the copying quality: it is unprofessional to say the least), and I would never have wanted to offend her (threaten her face) with a more direct indication that perhaps she ought to stop now, since I suspected it was all Marco's fault I was more or less resigned do it going on (I didn't really want to force Marco to have to lose his face and hers by telling her), but I did not truly believe in the power of the hint (although some flash of HC inspiration had obviously possessed me). I had just thrown it half-heartedly. I have had occasion to

witness or be involved in many more similar cases, where it would seem that merely «raising an issue» or even simply «just saying something, anything about a topic» (with the right contextual premises and cues to act as trigger) «invites inference» or «conversational implicatures» (to put it in Brown & Levinson terms, 1978: 218). Why was I embarrassed though (although I admit to having more or less consciously used the strategy)? My own background model presumably prefers more speaker responsibility for meaning, and reads slyness (i.e. negative loading) into non-direct/literal representation of meaning and/or intentions. Furthermore, I am sure that she probably thinks that I did not really think the tape quality was bad (it's not totally awful), but that I was just saying it, to say something to serve as hint. In other words I'm also worried about my sincerity at the word level. She, on the other hand, is probably merely grateful to me for not having let her know directly because in that way we can pretend there was no problem, and her face (and perhaps also mine, and Marco's) is saved. I showed at least sincerity 'of mood'.

3.2. Paper talk

Let me proceed now to illustrate two further examples which are particularly neatly exemplary, I think, of each culture/discourse type I sketched earlier. I was the addressee in both cases. The general situation the end of a session at an academic conference at which I had just given a paper. The speakers were both conference participants, who shall of course remain anonymous. I have chosen these examples (despite their possibly embarrassing nature), rather than any number of others I might have discussed, because they seem to be «too good to be true», in just about perfect complementary distribution:

- a) «*Dobbiamo fare qualcosa insieme, ti chiamo*» («we must/should get together to work on something. I'll call you» (a S. Italian speaker (A) who was rushing off).
- b) «*I liked your talk, it was very intuitive*»⁴² (English original, the speaker (B) is a Northern-European).

⁴² I am reporting from memory, and have clearly deleted details which are, I believe, irrelevant to my point. Recall data suffers from the disadvantage of the loss of objectivity (see also Ervin-Tripp 1987: 51). What recall data can contribute positively is a function of the fact that it reflects the hearer's or observer's

With the hindsight of the 36 months or so which have elapsed since that conference and my inside knowledge of various aspects of the context, and of what ensued in terms of follow up exchanges or action from these personal encounters, as well as being able to authoritatively report on the cognitive and affective perlocutionary effects, i.e. the hearer's own personal feeling and or interpretation at the time, I feel confident that my remarks are relatively reliable or pertinent (and I hope that this advantage will offset the personal nature of the discussion).

What ensued was that: Speaker A has not so far got in touch with me at all (we live in the same city), while speaker B wrote to me (from abroad) less than 2 months later to ask me to participate in a joint project.

What can we deduce from this about their intentions and therefore their 'sincerity' at the time of utterance?

Now, clearly both speakers were intending to be solidary or kind. And indeed they achieved the manifest goal of communicating their intention of being solidary. And at that level we must assume that they were being sincere. There were no cues for irony or teasing or ulterior motives for feigning solidarity.⁴³

Speaker A by expressing a desire to work together was implying a positive evaluation of my work now, and both the assertion and the implication, or communicated presupposition, carried appreciation and therefore solidarity. This, would be true whichever culture type speaker or hearer belonged to. Speaker A however is a Southern Italian and his addressee ostensibly a Northern European, a known non-native (albeit seemingly competent) speaker of Italian... Speaker A seen in HC mode has made a perfectly normal sort of comment which *intra* culturally would be interpreted at the level of the implication (or is it the presuppo-

perception of significance. I remember clearly that with a) I came away feeling that he *would* get in touch (and I was a little worried because of the reasons I mention). So whatever he actually said I definitely perceived him as expressing a clear future intention.

⁴³ This does not necessarily mean that their sub-goals were all sincere. As one can see in Vincent & Castelfranchi 1981 (also Castelfranchi & Vincent this volume), one can break down an utterance's goals into a hierarchy, with the sub-goals functioning as means towards the ultimate goal. These intermediate goals may be sincere or not independently of the sincerity of solidarity of the end-goal. In that paper, e.g. we saw how deceptive end-goals could be achieved through sincere sub-goals. The opposite situation can occur too, i.e. one can be sincere while saying something one believes to be false.

sition?), as 'I appreciate your work'. Sincerity or truth value would be judgeable here and would not at all normally be judged at the literal level of the assertion or promise or invitation; I am not saying that while he said «*we must work together*» or «*I'll get in touch*» he was not necessarily envisaging the possibility that this might happen one day,⁴⁴ but rather that he knew that he was not anyway ever going to be interpreted by a fellow member as having committed⁴⁵ himself to it; it is simply a potential, and anyway: «*we all know that things crop up, the right moment never seems to materialize, you never know one day, in the meantime you know that (I want you to know that I want you to assume that) I appreciate your work*»; and at the same time, «*I have left open the possibility, you may remember I mentioned it later; I have, furthermore, by conveying my appreciation implicitly actually communicated it even more strongly than if I had simply said I liked your paper*».

This last point, rather than any other of the possible reasons why indirectness or implication may convey solidarity or rapport, would be applicable here, I think. The message is reinforced by being carried on two tracks as it were, the assertion and the implicature; or, rather perhaps because the inner track the embedded implicature is less open to doubt, and it doesn't actually matter if the literal assertion, is not at the time true or turns out to be later unsupported by reality, or spoken non-seriously (see Vincent-Marrelli 1994), because judgment of speaker intention and thus of sincerity will be made on the conveyed meaning, which in this discourse/culture type is quite normally simply the embedded presupposition. As a native (one-time anyway) member of a LC culture, my first reaction was to respond (mentally) interpretatively by attending to the literal value as to a flattering and serious invitation and immediately start worrying how I might let him know without risking hurting his feelings that I would very probably never have the time to fit it in (our fields are not obviously close⁴⁶ and I have enough problems trying to juggle

⁴⁴ Time in HC seems to move at a different pace anyway (see Hall 1985).

⁴⁵ Even a performatively explicit commissive such as 'te lo prometto...' may be taken with a pinch of salt by a hearer in HC mode, since everyone knows that things can 'crop up' so it is merely an expression of a vague intention or possibly of wishful thinking. There is no hindering commitment entered into.

⁴⁶ I must add a further bit of possibly relevant contextual information, that is, that I had mentioned in my oral delivery a possible link between our

my own work with a large young family), and therefore since I was already pretty certain of this I felt compelled (as a LC member) to let him know straight away. But my acquired HC program started up in time and I was able to tune in to his mode and thus responded, I think, appropriately, with something like: «*si certo, mi farebbe piacere*», also incidentally respecting (to some degree) my own need for literal veracity with the help of the conditional [it *would* be nice, I *would* like to (if...)].⁴⁷ If I had actually answered (literally sincerely) by addressing this point I would most certainly have offended him (an HC member) because I would have been perceived as implying (albeit solidarily) that I didn't *want* to work with him (a possible embedded or invited inference from the implication «*I won't be able to work with you*», easily recoverable from the sort of utterance I would probably have uttered in LC mode, such as «*I'd love to, but I think it would probably be a bit difficult, you see I've got a lot of... I'm so ... bla bla*»). And my 'excuses' would have sounded like feeble white lies, in other words not only would I have been offensive implicitly but also perceived as insincere (when I was actually saying the truth)! An LC speaker assumes an LC hearer will appreciate the straightness (when someone is already pretty sure about future events) of setting the score right straightway so that no unnecessary expectations are set up. To leave open a possibility when you know there is none would be rude in LC, because it would be inconsiderate of the hearer's culturally presupposed right

perspectives. Speaker A may have, then, when uttering (a) have been merely meaning to thank me (indirectly) for having thus implicitly shown appreciation of *his* work.

⁴⁷ It may of course be the case that my delivery was not quite right (something slightly wrong with the intonation or my smile or whatever) and that he took them as a (slightly feeble) attempt at a put off, or simply that even if I did get it right (that I got it *so* right, indeed) that he took it that I had taken it as a mere compliment, and would not expect him to necessarily follow it up. So, whether or not the delivery of my response was perfect, does not really change the outcome: he didn't get in touch. But let me go on: the physical outcome is the same but the reasons for not getting in touch might not be. For if he discerned in my response awkward or smooth politeness (and not real interest, assuming he had been seriously intending to work together) then we would have a good case of how meaning can be jointly negotiated in the exchange by the participants, because he would simply then (by not having got in touch) have (demonstrated that he) agreed with my interpretation of his act as an expressive rather than a commissive. Still showing, anyway, that this would be permissible in the assumed cultural/discoursal contextual matrix of resources for interpretation (but not in the British/North European, LC, one).

to be able to plan rationally, and independently, or unhindered, his time ahead, with as many certain facts as available. It would also violate something like Grice's so called Quantity maxim,⁴⁸ because it would be denying a relevant (to the hearer) fact, not giving the whole (relevant) truth in one's possession. Indeed, as other authors have pointed out, Grice's maxims appear in the light of wider ethnographic data to be ethnocentric. This maxim would seem to be pertinent especially to LC.

Speakers from all cultures would undoubtedly, all things being equal, have wanted to avoid offending, of course. The point is that in HC it is imperative, compelling and thus takes priority over literal truth saying. Whereas the LC feels an almost irresistible compulsion for literal truth saying and may risk not communicating solidarity, certainly not by positive politeness strategies but will (when necessary to compromise) opt for the negative politeness strategy, something like my possible utterance above. The HC speaker will tend to go for the positive politeness strategy, even it means suspending truth value on the vehicle propositions or assertions. In HC it is important, in a refusal, for example, not to communicate this too close to the surface; even quite deeply embedded a hearer will usually infer or suspect it, but what is most important is that they infer, from your embedding of it, that you are communicating with more priority your intention not to threaten face, that is to be solidary. It is even possible to go so far as to say that the deeper you are perceived to have hidden or embedded the possible face threat the stronger is your perceived bid to be solidary. And thus the better is it appreciated, from the point of view of your rapport. There is no harm done if the information literally conveyed is not true, because it is usually not 'relevant' i.e. vital to the hearer's needs. If it were then the local contextualization cues would point to the need for the use of a less HC mode, and speakers would adapt accordingly by being explicit about not being vague or «loose», for example (see e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1991 on loose talk) by specifying explicitly: «*due di numero*», «*alle tre in punto*», etc. [see Vincent Marrelli (1994)].

So speaker A would, by a purer LC hearer than myself, have most probably by now have been written off as untrustworthy, someone who uses language too lightly, unable to keep his word,

⁴⁸ Assuming it is necessary or useful to separate it out from a more general Relevance principle (see Wilson this volume).

or they would still be wondering why he hasn't got in touch, either that or the hearer would have retrospective doubts about the speaker's sincerity, while uttering his comment, but at the time he would probably not doubt that it was meant seriously.⁴⁹

Speaker B now, if he had been addressing another pure LC member⁵⁰ again would have safely through assertion, that is explicitly have unequivocally transmitted his appreciation and solidarity. [Here solidarity, which is not necessarily taken for granted and anyway is not demanded (in other words it would be in this context 'marked' in LC) is best transmitted explicitly. It is not acceptable, without running the real risk of being insincere, of embedding a true implication in a false assertion (or non serious promise) for this. Why bother, anyway?].

⁴⁹ It has been pointed out to me by S. Italian friends that speaker A is probably an extreme case, in that he is assuming an extreme HC persona, that most S. Italian academics would not have in this setting and without our having had previous acquaintance. He has assumed and/or cued intimacy (i.e. reflected and/or constituted it), by his use of «Tu» and by his use of *vague* reference to future possibilities. These *contextualization cues* (see Gumperz 1992) as well as my perception of his 'personality' (if such a term has any sense – see Piro this volume) cued me to his probably using in that instance the HC mode. Anyway, an extreme case suits me methodologically, as it serves to better highlight the contrast between the two polarized modes after all. Apart from some judgments of his extremism, other S. Italian academic friends with participative access to, or acknowledged familiarity with, the HC mode in their own repertoires have confirmed that the outcome was not particularly surprising, even in the given setting (where intimacy is often assumed, especially in 'progressive' circles, and between assumed members of a like-minded sun-group); indeed, speaker A may have called just as easily as not: either way would not have been surprising.

⁵⁰ The impurity of my examples (although, of course, illustrative of intercultural communication through my personal access to the repertoire of styles or modes) might be seen to represent a problem in that the hearer being the same multicultural individual is not a pure member of either and may not therefore represent in the speakers' eyes the simple ideal hearer. In fact their perception of this aspect is one important part of the context I am not privy to. However, in as much as the talk and the ensuing action itself provides clues to the speakers' perception of the context, I feel that I was being perceived by speaker (A) as essentially sharing his assumptions either (i) because he assumed I had been in Naples long enough or (ii) because he didn't envisage any other mode. Speaker (B), by using the LC mode, only saying explicitly what he felt ready to endorse, either assumed that (i) I shared his same assumptions, (although I was now a resident in S. Italy, I am apparently a Northern European), or (ii) that he knew no other style, or (iii) that, as an experienced intercultural communicator, he was aware of possible style mismatch, and thus knowingly or instinctively used the safest, most rational style in the circumstances (conditions of uncertainty or assumed imperfect knowledge), i.e. *be explicit* and *be literally true* (if your intentions are sincere).

As it was I was pleased that he wanted to show me solidarity but I was not at all sure (hearer insecurity raising its head) that the first assertion was true, given the second assertion, in other words I was not sure that he was being sincere. (We are not obviously talking about malevolent deception here, or untrustworthiness). I had become enough of a HC to begin suspending judgement on surface values, and anyway, LC speakers of course also engage in polite, solidary lying. I was thus surprised and flattered when the invitation arrived shortly afterwards because it presupposed that his first assertion had been sincere, and the second was unambiguously meant to be positive. Now, it is even possible (given the short time interval between his uttering of (b) and his issuing a concrete invitation, and the advanced nature of the project in which I was being invited to participate) that speaker B already had, at the time, a vague idea towards some follow up, but since he wasn't yet sure of it, i.e. he couldn't vouch for it happening, he did not even hint at it. If he had, and it hadn't come off, he would have anticipated being perceived retrospectively as insincere or untrustworthy.

So to sum up, you take a HC individual who is talking to a LC hearer (in any language)⁵¹ and intends to communicate rapport sincerely (i.e. with no ulterior deceptive motive), he may do this by uttering something whose literal meaning is false (or not necessarily true) e.g. make a prediction (note that he would not see himself as making a 'promise') which he does not necessarily see as highly probable, although he may well be one of the components in it himself, while being yet sincere, since he believes (given the assumptions he has about their shared assumptions) that his hearer will simply interpret it as e.g. *«I want to say something nice to you. I want to imply that your talk was good»*, by assigning truth value to the solidary implication while suspending judgment, or even ignoring that of the vehicle assertion.

The LC hearer on the other hand, given his LC cultural assumptions, will still infer of course what the HC wants him to

⁵¹ It actually doesn't matter here I think which language is being used, whether it is the native language of one of the two interlocutors or whether it is a third language being used as lingua franca – it is the mismatching of the discourse styles, unconsciously imported into, or grafted onto the acting host language which reflect the underlying cultural values, and which causes the misperceptions.

(e.g. «*I want to let you know I liked your talk*»), but at the same time will assume that the literal meaning was also intended to be taken seriously. When he (the LC) sees later that it wasn't he will certainly perceive him as untrustworthy (regarding the 'promise' – making an assertion about one's own involvement in some future event is tantamount in LC to committing oneself to bringing it about) and may even assume he was insincere (as to the embedded appreciation) and will wonder why the speaker will have felt it necessary to pretend such a reinforced commitment to his appreciation. He himself would have simply (as speaker B did) have explicated the solidarity more literally rather than embed it in something whose literal meaning he couldn't endorse, and would have simply said «*I liked your talk*».

4. *Some concluding remarks*

I am not saying that LC speakers do not ever perform deceptive or insincere or devious acts, nor that they are incapable of making inferences of course, but rather that the locus of sincerity or truth value is placed also and primarily, I suggest, at the literal level, while for the HC speaker the locus may primarily actually be elsewhere, sitting below or floating above the surface, anywhere but not *on* the surface, i.e. the conveyed meaning may involve an embedded presupposition, or an inferentially recovered implicature, or simply the illocutionary force, or again it may not be in the linguistic utterance at all (except as a hint of an issue), but simply in the presumed shared context. In the first case, being embedded, it is taken for granted and therefore not easily questioned [and can thus also be used as a 'presupposition faking' strategy for deception (Castelfranchi & Vincent, this volume)]; in the second case, that of implicature, which is indirectly or non-communicatively conveyed, it is induced in the hearer without the speaker taking direct responsibility for it. By doing this (reinforcing⁵² the solidary message) the HC wishes to guarantee

⁵² I would seem to disagree with Wilson and Sperber 1986 on this. They hold that implication is a «weak» form of communication, since it is not «manifest». However although it is weakly communicated in that the speaker is showing that he does not intend to communicate it ostensively, it is nonetheless strongly interpreted by the hearer, in that the hearer will infer its relevance to himself. Furthermore, an implication is never lost on a S. Italian, as I have suggested, and

that there is no doubt in the hearer's mind as to the sincerity of his appreciation or anyway about his intent to be solidary. Indeed this may be one of the reasons why the HC tends to impute hypocrisy to LC protestations of straight talking. HC speakers too of course can be and are just as often as anybody anywhere, whatever culture they come from, insincere, deceptive, untrustworthy, whatever. However, I could suggest that HC might have an even richer set of strategies to manipulate in order to achieve deceptive goals because of the higher degree of context richness normally used in the interpretation process in HC communication mode. Furthermore, when it is assumed meaning is not so much in the text as in the context (to use Hall's idea) then one can also play with, negotiate and pretend all sorts of degrees of contextualization and intentionality behind utterance acts.

Finally though, let me just recall my (after all) simple aim in this paper: that when speakers or interactants from different cultural backgrounds with their different communicative styles interact, there may be *mistaken* perceptions of each others intentions, i.e. a speaker who does not intend to deceive as to his/her emotive and/or cognitive state, may be, for all or some of the reasons I have outlined, misperceived as being insincere, or indeed, misperceived as being sincere on one or more of the different levels of intention or meaning s/he has conveyed.

On the practical level, by being made aware of this possibility and of its workings, cross-cultural speakers may be able to raise their uncertainty levels and thus be able to suspend hurried and rigid, inappropriate judgements of insincerity, trustworthiness, niceness, etc. Of course they still may be duped (on any or all levels) by deceptively intent interlocutors, whatever culture s/he represents. I have not offered any ways to avoid being deceived by a deceptively intent speaker, but I have offered insights which may help to avoid being certain that you have been deceived by an essentially sincere or honest speaker. And, for speakers, I have given some idea of how to avoid being perceived as insincere when you have no such intent, at least in that it may help to make a cross-cultural interactant aware that he may be so misperceived. One can, of course, manipulate all of this for deceptive purposes interculturally, but that's a different story.

they always entertain the possibility that it was also part of the speaker's intended message.

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