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## The outskirts of linguistic persuasion: measuring implicit presentation of questionable information

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## THEORY

## WHAT CAN BE IMPLICIT

## Implicitness of content

## Implicatures

- (1) a Will you go to Bengasi, next summer?
  - b You know, Lybia has become very dangerous...

## Vagueness

(2) El Medano Resort: you will enjoy your stay in Tenerife

#### SIMILARITY BETWEEN LINGUISTIC IMPLICITS AND NON-LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION

### Glen Grant – Images and non-linguistic Sounds

Awareness that the source is trying to **modify** our beliefs raises critical reaction.

- ➢But this is the very essence of assertion: to propose some content as something by which one *wants* to modify your beliefs.
- Implicits partly conceal this intention, since they «circumvent» critical judgment

(Frege 1892.... Givón 1982, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1986, Rigotti 1988, Lombardi Vallauri 1993; 1995, Sbisà 2007. For implicatures: Grice 1975, Sperber & Wilson 1986. For presuppositions: Strawson 1964, Garner 1971, Ducrot 1972. For persuasion in particular: Lombardi Vallauri 1995, 2009, Sbisà 2007, Saussure 2013, Lombardi Vallauri - Masia 2014).

### **PERSUASIVE EXPLOITATION OF** *IMPLICATURES* (AND *VAGUENESS*)



#### PERSUASIVE EXPLOITATION OF *IMPLICATURES* (AND *VAGUENESS*)



Are we to stop great public works? No, thanks



More taxes on your savings? No, thanks

#### **PERSUASIVE EXPLOITATION OF** *IMPLICATURES* (AND *VAGUENESS*)



More taxes on your house? No, thanks



Illegal immigrants at will? No, thanks

#### **PERSUASIVE EXPLOITATION OF IMPLICATURES**



#### IMPLICITS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THEIR "EXAPTATION"

## Presupposition as a reducer of processing effort

(3) I exist. I have a mother. This mother wears cloths. A shop called Isetan exists. A place called Ginza exists. Isetan is located at Ginza. It sells cloths. My mother bought a cloth there. Days exist. Among them, one that precedes the present one. This day is called "yesterday". Well, right on that day, my mother stained that cloth with blueberry ice cream.

(4) Yesterday my mother stained the cloth she had bought from Ginza Isetan with blueberry ice cream.

### A FIRST "EXAPTATION" STEP: ALLOWING *EFFORT ECONOMY* ON THE NOT-KNOWN

(5) Please, go downstairs and tell Tim to **stop** ironing: the oven is on, and I need to use the vacuum cleaner

If the addressee ignores that Tim is ironing, the source may also be more explicit:

(5a) *Tim is ironing*. Please go downstairs and tell him to stop, because the oven is on, and I need to use the vacuum cleaner

A SECOND, LAST "EXAPTATION" STEP: SMUGGLING *QUESTIONABLE* CONTENTS

Presuppositions as a means of distraction



Don't watch the world with the others' eyes. Open yours

## THE THREE FUNCTIONS OF *PRESUPPOSITION*

Function 1, when the content which is presented as presupposed is actually shared and already known to the addressee: to save the addressee the superfluous effort which would result from processing that content *ex novo*;

Function 2, when the content which is presented as presupposed is not actually shared or already known to the addressee, but is not questionable, and is *bona fide* true:
to save the addressee the superfluous effort of processing content that can receive minor attention without any damage to the comprehension of the message;

**Function 3**, when the content which is presented as presupposed is not actually shared or already known to the addressee and, in addition, it is questionable or even false:

to prevent the addressee from becoming completely aware of the details of that content, lest he may challenge and reject it.

#### **TOPICS AS (WEAKER?) DISTRACTORS**

Bredart & Modolo (1988), manipulating the Moses Illusion Test:

It was [MOSES]<sub>F</sub> who took two animals of each kind on the Ark vs. It was [TWO ANIMALS]<sub>F</sub> of each kind that Moses took on the Ark)

(6) Dall'altro lato, *un'idea di Europa che in questi anni non ha funzionato*, ha fallito (Matteo Renzi, Democratic Party)

(On the other hand, an idea of Europe which, in these years, has not worked, it has failed)

(7) Insomma un delinquente abituale, recidivo e dedito al crimine, anche organizzato, *visti i suoi sodali* (Paola Taverna, Five Star Movement)

(So, a customary criminal, recidivist and prone to crime, even organized crime, judging from his supporters)

#### **PERSUASIVE EXPLOITATION OF** *TOPICS*



To enter Europe, choose the right key

## A QUANTITATIVE PROPOSAL

- How much questionable content is left implicit in a text?
   Do implicit communicative devices differently contribute (in both qualitative and quantitative terms) to the underencoding of relevant contents in a message?
- How can the impact of these strategies be quantified and how does it affect the recoverability of the persuasive contents they encode?
- A compelling line of investigation in this sense is being currently pursued for public communication in Italy...

## METHODOLOGY

Relevant categories of implicit communication	Implicitness of responsibility	Implicitness of content	Global ratings
Торіс			
Торіс	3.0	0.0	3.0
Implicatures			
Conventional implicatures	0.0	1.0	1.0
Generalized implicatures	0.0	2.0	2.0
Conversational implicatures	0.0	3.0	3.0
Presuppositions			
Presupposition in <i>Focus</i>	4.0	0.0	4.0
Presupposition + Topic	4+3 = 7.0	0.0	7.0
Presupposed implicatures			
Presupposition + conventional implicature in <i>Focus</i>	4.0	1.0	5.0
Presupposition + conventional implicature + <i>Topic</i>	4+3 = 7.0	1.0	8.0
Presupposition + generalized implicature in Focus	4.0	2.0	6.0
Presupposition + generalized implicature + Topic	4+3 = 7.0	2.0	9.0
Presupposition + conversational implicature in Focus	4.0	3.0	7.0
Presupposition + conversational implicature + <i>Topic</i>	4+3 = 7.0	3.0	10
Pragmatic presuppositions (not depending on synt. or lex. triggers) in Focus	4.0	3.0	7.0
Pragmatic presuppositions (not depending on synt. or lex. triggers) + Topic	4+3 = 7.0	3.0	10
Vagueness			
Syntactic vagueness	0.0	3.0	3.0
Semantic vagueness	0.0	3.0	3.0

## WARNINGS...

➤ Rather than hinting at absolute ratings, the indexes assigned should be taken in a **relative** sense, i.e. for the **impact differences** they establish between implicit strategies.

➢ When comparing two or more texts, it is important to reduce potential confounds by homogenizing parameters such as *aim*, *audience*, *pre-existing background knowledge*, *length of the texts, topic*, etc.

## **COMPUTATION CRITERIA**

When you bribed people in exchange of votes...

n. of characters of the implicit category 36= ----= 0,004 > 0,4%Total n. of characters of the whote text 9.000

0,004 x category-related Index = 0,004 x 4 = 0,02

**0,02** is the overall impact (= **persuasiveness**) of the relevant occurrence on the whole text.

And so on...

## **TEXT ANALYSIS**

#### **Matteo Salvini**

- 1. Perché, quando c'è un terremoto, una frana o una slavina, non devono arrivare da
- 2. 600 chilometri di distanza[impl]. Tu devi averli a Napoli, devi averli a Verona, devi averli
- 3. in Abruzzo, ragazze e ragazzi pronti a intervenire. E magari, qualcuno[vag] di quelli che
- 4. oggi era fuori a far casino, avesse fatto qualche mese di servizio militare[ppp+top],
- 5. avrebbe la schiena un po' più dritta e la testa un po' più apposto[impl],
- 6. per non perdere tempo in quella maniera lì[impl].

#### Implicitness of content: Implicature

Example: non devono arrivare da 600 chilometri di distanza

'they do not have to come from 600 kilometers away' **Implicature** : they used to come from 600 kilometers away

#### Matteo Salvini

Line	Text	Category	n. char. respons.	ext. respons.	respons. index	respons. intensity	n. char. content	ext. content	Content index	Global implicitness
1-2	Non devono arrivare da 600 chilometri di distanza	Impl.convr.	-	-	-	-	42	0,002	3	0,007
3	qualcuno	vag	-	-	-	-	8	0,0005	3	0,001
4	Avesse fatto qualche mese di servizio militare	ppp+top	44	0,0025	7	0,02	-	-	-	0,02
5	Avrebbe la schiena un po' più dritta e la testa un po' più apposto	ррр	98	0,013	4	0,05	-	-	-	0,05
6	per non perdere tempo in quella maniera lì	Impl. Convrs.	-	-	-	-	37	0,002	3	0,006
Tot.				<mark>0,2</mark>		<mark>0,8</mark>	<mark>0,06</mark>		<mark>0,3</mark>	<mark>1,12</mark>

#### Luigi Di Maio

- 1. Dopo la caduta del vostro impero[ppp+top], arriverà un nuovo Rinascimento di questo Paese, e
- 2. quest'aula sarà composta finalmente da una maggioranza di cittadini liberi[impl], che non avrà bisogno
- 3. di piazzare i propri compari a capo della Consip per favorire gli imprenditori amici degli appalti
- 4. pubblici, che non avrà bisogno di rimborsi elettorali per dopare la propria forza politica, non avrà
- 5. bisogno di finanziare le banche perché le banche avevano finanziato le vostre fondazioni[impl].

## Implicitness of responsibility: Presupposition and Topic

**Example**: Dopo la caduta del vostro impero

'After the fall of your empire'

Presupposition: a. the hearer is already aware about the existence of an empire

b. the hearer is responsible for this content

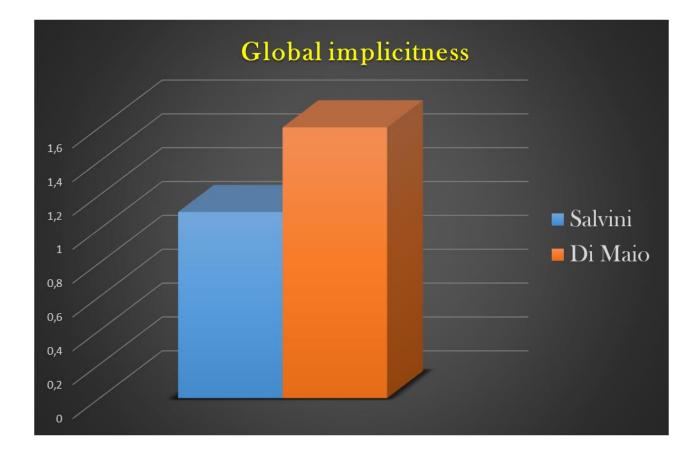
<u>Topic</u>: a. the existence of an empire is part of the hearer's knowledge

b. the hearer is not required to pay attentoin to this information

#### Luigi Di Maio

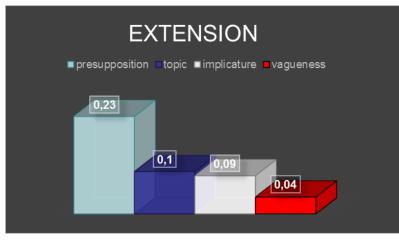
Line	Text	Category	n. char. respons.	ext. respons.	respons. index	respons. intensity	n. char. content	ext. content	Content index	Global implicitness
			1.051.01151	100 <b>P</b> 01150		j		•••••••		<b>p</b>
1	Dopo la caduta del vostro impero	ppp+top	27	0,004	7	0,026	-	-		0,026
2-3	Finalmente da una maggioranza di cittadini liberi	Impl.convn.	-	-	-	-	46	0,006	1	0,006
2-3- 4-5	Che non avrà bisogno di piazzare i propri compari a capo della Consip per favorire gli imprenditori amici degli appalti pubblici []	Impl. Convrs.	-	-	-	-	270	0,04	3	0,12
6-7	Le vostre ghigliottine, con le vostre forzature regolamentari, i vostri insabbiamenti di leggi importanti	ррр	98	0,013	4	0,05	-	-	-	0,05
		•••		•••	•••		•••	•••	•••	•••
Tot.				<mark>0,3</mark>		<mark>1,2</mark>	0,12		<mark>0,3</mark>	<mark>1,6</mark>

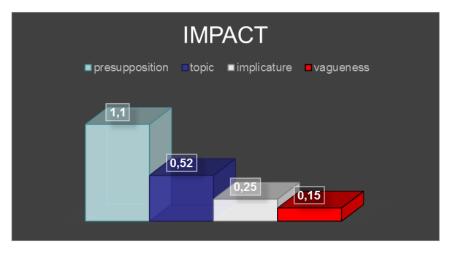
## **COMPARING GLOBAL IMPLICITNESS VALUES**



## DISENTANGLING EACH CATEGORY'S IMPLICITNESS IMPACT

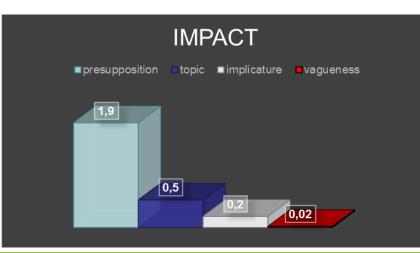
## Luigi di Maio





### Matteo Salvini



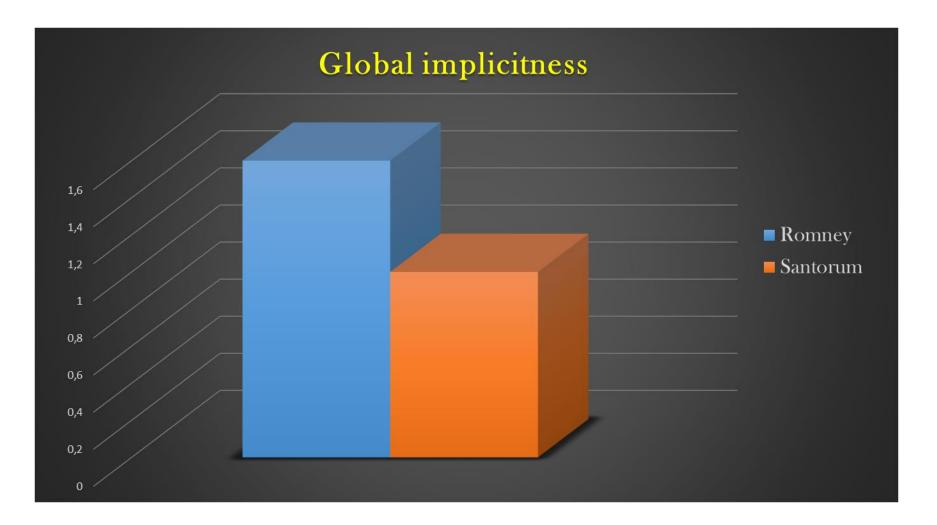


#### **Rick Santorum**

- 1. It's getting harder for people to make ends meet, because we have a government that is crushing us
- 2. every single day with more taxes, more regulations, and the idea that they know better than you how to
- 3. run your life[ppp]. That ultimately is about what this race is about. It goes down to the very nature of
- 4. who we are as Americans[ppp]. Are we a country that believes in big government?[impl] Do we believe
- 5. in the smart and elite in this country to manage us? Or do you believe in free people and a free economy
- 6. and building a great America from the bottom up?[impl] What do you say?

#### **Mitt Romney**

- 1. President Obama and I have two very different visions of America[ppp]. President Obama wants to
- 2. grow government and continues to amass trillion dollar deficits[ppp]. I will not just slow the growth of
- 3. government[ppp], I will cut it. I will not just freeze government's share of the total economy[ppp], I will
- 4. reduce it. And, without raising taxes[top], I will finally balance the budget[impl]. President Obama's
- 5. view of capitalism[ppp] is to send your money to his friends' companies[ppp]. My vision for free
- 6. enterprise[ppp] is to return entrepreneurship to the genius and creativity of the American people[ppp].

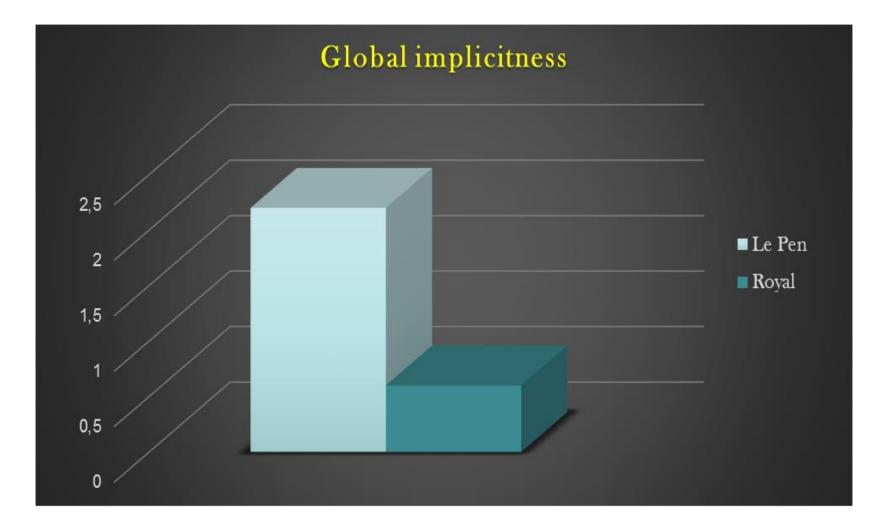


#### Marine Le Pen

- 1. Parce que c'est ainsi que vous voulez changer le monde, et défendre votre pays [top]. Alors je ne
- 2. m'abaisserai pas, je ne vous abaisserai pas, à vous parler de [impl] la petite politique, celle qui s'étale
- 3. vulgairement tous les jours dans vos journaux, celle qui au fond n'intéresse plus grand monde tant elle
- 4. est méprisable [ppp+impl]. Je ne vous parlerai pas de ces petites combines, de ces guéguerres, de ces
- 5. spectacles minables auxquels on nous donne chaque jour la peine d'assister [impl].

#### Ségolène Royal

- 1. Chers amis, à dix-huit jours du premier tour de l'élection présidentielle, le moment est venu de
- 2. lancer un vibrant appel à tous ceux qui veulent s'abstenir ou qui hésitent à venir voter, alors que le
- 3. changement a besoin de tout le peuple de France[impl], peuple libre, peuple fier, peuple rebelle et
- 4. qui mérite un nouveau destin[impl]. Oui, un nouveau destin pour stopper la voracité financière sans
- 5. limites qui veut imposer sa loi, pour arrêter une mauvaise gouvernance qui aggrave les
- 6. injustices[ppp].



# **OUR PROJECT**



## 'Permanent Observatory for Advertising and Political Propaganda'



## Speech annotation

p.it/portfolio/confronto-grillo-salvini-su-referendum-costituzionale/

#### )SA FACCIAMO COME LO FACCIAMO



75. essere solo la tua vita! Dunque, il cervello arriva sempre con alcuni secondi di ritardo nella 76. percezione della verità, perché abbiamo la verità e abbiamo la realtà. Sono due cose diverse. 77. A volte dai per scontato dei significati che non ci sono! Quando noi, prendendomi io e Gian 78. Roberto, avevamo deciso di non prendere né soldi e né rimborsi elettorali/ppp+top], ci 79. siamo presi vagonate di merda, da tutti! Come? Prendi i soldi, 42 milioni, e poi li dedichi a 80. fattori benefici, a piccole e medie imprese. Perché non prendete i soldi e li date alle piccole e 81. medie imprese? Perché, ho detto, poi ci sarà la piccolissima impresa che si incazza, 82. quell'altra associazione che si incazza. Noi, per principio, non prendiamo soldi. Abbiamo 83. dovuto combattere, non era semplice. E io pensavo che questa azione, in un momento di 84. disintegrazione della politica/top], fosse capita da tutti gli italiani. Esce un movimento e non 85. prende 42 milioni di euro di rimborsi elettorali. Io credevo di uscire, che c'è uno onesto, mi 86. abbracceranno, mi sbaciucchieranno, con quelle bocche maledette. Invece, la maggior parte 87. degli italiani non ci ha creduto, non ci ha creduto. Sì, non li ha presi, però, chissà, sotto cosa 88. c'è, sotto cosa fai? E allora dai per scontato certi significati che non arrivano. Come dire, 89. siamo onesti, onesti, onesti. Abbiamo dovuto gridare "siamo onesti!". Dio mio, è terribile 90. sentire uno gridarsi da solo "sono onesto", no? È l'ultima persona che se lo deve dire "sono 91. onesto", perché se io vengo e dico "sono onesto" la maggior parte di voi/vag/ pensa il 92. contrario! È così, è così! Pensi il contrario! Perché, perché, se sei onesto te lo devono dire 93. gli altri. Noi dobbiamo escogitare delle tattiche di comunicazione completamente 94. diverse/ppp], come fa il tenente Colombo. Il tenente Colombo si fa suggerire l'indagine 95. dall'assassino. Noi dobbiamo fare così. E queste persone/vag], che noi abbiamo attaccato, 96. fino al midollo. E sono da attaccare, spregevoli. Ma sono talmente spregevoli da andare oltre

## Data analysis



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