An Expectation-Based View of Human Communication

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the phenomenon of successful communication within a contextualist view of meanings and concepts. Contextualism faces significant problems when it tries to account for how communicative success happens, independently of whether communication is explained in terms of the traditional code model or of an inferential-based approach. My aim is to show that those difficulties do not constitute a crucial problem, since successful communication can be accounted for in the absence of shared meanings, contents, or intentions. My proposal consists in a conception of human communication based on information unquestionably available to the speaker, such as her own expectations about the audience's behavior and the hearer's public response to the speaker's communicative contribution. This will lead to a weak definition of communicative success, whose successful character is determined by the end point of the conversational exchange, and not by a sort agreement—or mutual understanding—between the speaker and the hearer.

Keywords

Contextualism, communication, meaning, concepts, expectations.

1. Introduction

According to the classical view of successful communication ideas can be shared by people, so communication succeeds if the idea grasped by the hearer is the same as the speaker's idea. Under this view, communication is explained either resorting to the notion of shared contents between speaker and hearer—or relaxing the shared-content condition and claiming that contents can be merely similar. Anyway, all these approaches accept some amount of invariantism, either as shared contents, or as context-independent conditions for the evaluation of communicative success. However, that is not an option for contextualists, who claim that hearers attend to context when they identify the content of utterances, so there would not be context-independent contents, meanings, or conditions. Thus, the explanation of successful communication is still a major challenge for any advocate of contextualism.

My goal is to show that in spite of the important difficulties faced by contextualism when trying to explain how communicative success happens (section 2), independently of whether it is conceived in terms of the traditional code model or of the pragmatist inferential views (section 3), those difficulties do not constitute a crucial problem because cooperation can

be accounted for in the absence of shared meanings and concepts. In particular, I will take as starting point the Gricean view of communication and meaning, in order to articulate my proposal around a procedural definition of communication, whose successful character will be determined by the end point of the conversational exchange and not by a sort of agreement between the speaker and the hearer (section 4). This approach will be based only on information unquestionably available to the interpreter, and on a set of communicative principles that, by means of the generation and satisfaction of expectations about the responses of the other subjects, will guide and explain the conversational behavior of both the speaker and the hearer. Lastly, I will show that, since every subject knows her own expectations about the behavior of the other participants—in response to her own conversational contributions—the satisfaction of expectations is a more plausible basis for the evaluation of communicative success than the satisfaction of intentions.

2. Successful communication in context

2.1. The idea of communicative success

The phenomenon of successful communication is usually accepted as a matter of fact both in the philosophies of language and mind. For instance, it is commonly thought that people with distinct backgrounds, beliefs, goals, etc., can—and normally do—understand each other, agree or disagree, and assert—or think on—the same statements; and all this relies on the assumption that successful communication is possible. In fact, it may be said that successful communication is the most basic phenomenon that any theory of communication ought to explain.

According to the classical view, ideas can be shared by people (i.e., different individuals can hold the same idea), so communication succeeds if the idea grasped by the hearer is the same as the speaker's idea (Locke 1690; Frege 1892). Under this approach, the phenomenon of successful communication is explained resorting to the notion of shared contents—or meanings—between the speaker and the hearer (Burge 1993; Newman 2005; Cappelen and Lepore 2006). That is, if the content recovered by the hearer is the same as the content intended by the speaker, then it is possible to say that communication has succeeded. Other alternative explanations relax the shared-content condition and claim that communication can succeed although contents are merely similar (i.e., not exactly the same) (Bezuidenhout 1997; Carston 2004; Pollock 2015).

All these approaches accept some amount of invariantism, either in the form of shared contents, or in the form of context-independent conditions for the evaluation of successful

communication. Unfortunately, relying on some invariantism is not an option for contextualism, according to which hearers have to pay attention to context when they try to identify contents, so there would not be context-independent contents or conditions[1] (Barsalou 1987; Casasanto and Lupyan 2015). Other less radical approaches do not consider that contextualist and invariantist accounts are incompatible ways of explaining successful communication, but that they play a role or not depending on each particular occasion. But how can context have an influence on the successful character of a communicative event? With regard to this, the speaker's perlocutionary intentions may vary from one occasion to another, so the same communicative interaction within the same external environment could be successful in one case and unsuccessful in the other. For instance, if the speaker uttered "[gesturing] he is eating shell-fish", in a situation where the hearer cannot determine the reference of "he", communication will be successful or not depending on whether the fixation of the referent is crucial for the speaker's intentions (Pollock 2021). The same could happen if the hearer's knowledge about some element of the speaker's utterance is decisive for the inferential understanding of the speaker's perlocutionary intentions. Examples like these suggest that there are cases of communication where the invariantist cannot provide an account of the successful—or unsuccessful—character of the communicative interaction.

2.2. Contextualism and communication

Contextualism is an approach to cognition and language according to which concepts and contents are sensitive to context, which can vary from one individual—or time—to another. Under this view, that is, if the content of a linguistic expression is dependent on context, which may be different for the speaker and the hearer, then the sharing of contents and concepts between the participants in a communicative exchange cannot be presumed. As a result, the contextualists owe an explanation of how communication across different contexts could happen in the absence of shared contents, and without such an account contextualism is either an incomplete or a failed approach to concepts and meaning.

Needless to say, the main advantage of contextualism, namely the promise of explaining communication when contents are not shared (i.e., when the invariantist conditions are not met),

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[1] This would be so even for the case of those linguistic expressions that have an invariant core meaning (i.e., a semantic meaning stable across contexts), such as indexicals and demonstrative pronouns, but whose semantic content must be determined on the basis of a set of contextual elements. The point is that although those contextual clues are not determined nor constrained by meaning, they play a crucial rule in fixing the references and truth values of their associated expressions and sentences (Stojanovic 2009).

is also its major challenge. In order to show that successful communication does not require that the participants in a communicative exchange attribute the same meanings to the same expressions—or share the concepts associated with the linguistic terms intervening in a conversation—contextualists have resorted to an inferential view of communication, where the intentions of the speaker to get a particular perlocutionary effect are at the center of the hearer's comprehension process.

Nonetheless, many times the conditions required for an inferential understanding by the hearer mirror the conditions demanded in the classical view—where the existence of shared contents and meanings was needed. For instance, the hearer must be able to recognize the speaker's intentions and must understand the content recovered from the speaker's utterance. This entails a dual problem: (i) the issue of sharing contents turns into the issue of identifying the speaker's intentions by the hearer; (ii) high prospects on what may be expected from communication remain (i.e., full understanding of the recovered content). With regard to the first question, the idea that intentions can be recognized is as much problematic as the idea that mental contents can be shared. In respect of the second, it is possible that more modest goals result more appropriate for a contextualist view of concepts and language, where none of the subjects intervening in a communicative exchange can be sure of the contents, intentions, and goals present in the minds of her conversational partners.

In many cases the hearer does not know the speaker's perlocutionary intentions, so in these situations it is difficult to say how a proper inferential process can happen, and how to judge the success or failure of a communicative interaction. In order to overcome these difficulties Pollock (2021) has recently suggested that successful communication requires only that the hearer recover the content expressed by the speaker in a way that is relevant to the perlocutionary intentions of the speaker. Her proposal is appealing, since it explains the distinct ways a speaker can react in response to different kinds of misunderstanding by the hearer.

All this considered, my idea is to articulate a procedural conception of communicative success where the successful character of communication is determined by the end point of a conversational exchange, and not by an agreement among the speaker and her audience, or a sort of understanding based on the satisfaction of the speaker's perlocutionary intentions. In order to achieve that goal, a set of communicative principles are needed, which will guide the conversational behavior of participants, and will determine when a communicative exchange ends.

3. Two main views of human communication

Communication is usually conceived as an event where a sender produces a signal, which is received and processed by the receiver, what leads to a change in the inner state of the receiver. This is clearly expressed by Pagin when he defines a communicative event in the following terms:

> Communication (...) is something that takes place in individual communicative events. In a communicative event there is a sender, a signal, and a receiver. The event is a process that starts with some inner state of the sender and ends with some inner state of the receiver. In between a signal is transmitted between sender and receiver. The relevant inner state of the sender takes part in causing the signal, and the signal in turn takes part in causing the relevant inner state of the receiver. (Pagin 2008: 88)

That is, communication starts with a sender's inner state that causes the production of a signal—or sequence of signals—transmitted over a specific medium or channel (e.g., a verbal utterance, a written message, a gesture or facial expression, etc.), which is received and interpreted by the receiver. As a result, that interpretation may lead to a change in the inner state of the receiver, and to other observable consequences. For the case of human communication, the sender and receiver are called speaker and hearer, inner states would be inner mental states, and the observable consequences are the result of the external behaviour of the hearer.

So conceived, human communication has been traditionally explained in terms of what is called the *code model* (Sperber and Wilson 1995), which understands communication as the encoding and decoding of messages on the basis of a code shared by the speaker and the hearer. However, the classical approach has been severely criticized by contemporary pragmatists who claim that the code model is inadequate because communication and comprehension involve more than the mere decoding of linguistic signals (Levinson 1983; Sperber and Wilson 1995). As a consequence, pragmatists have opted for an alternative inferential model, where comprehension and communication involve inferential processes not considered by the code model—more specifically, the hearer's inferential recognition of the speaker's intentions.

3.1. The traditional code model
According to the traditional code view, human communication is a sort of codified communication system—that is, a communication system whose work is based on a code—that operates in a way similar to other highly codified communication systems (e.g., artificial communication

protocols, programming languages, logic and mathematical notations, music notation, etc.) Under this view, human communication would work analogously to artificial communication, and would consist in the coding and decoding of messages/utterances, so a code shared between the speaker and the hearer is a must.

A code is a set of rules that define how to convert some kind of information (such as a letter, number, word, symbol, sound, image, etc.) into another. For example, a cipher code establishes how a plain character is transformed into a ciphered character (and vice versa); and musical notation translates written symbols into music played (and vice versa). Nonetheless, these two codified communication systems are different, because while a cipher code—with a particular key—produces always the same ciphered text from a given plain text, the music played from a written sheet music may vary from one interpreter or time to another. This is a key difference, since while cipher codes give rise to fully determined codified communication systems, the music produced from a same music sheet can differ from one occasion to another. The same happens when we compare human language (as a case of a natural codified communication system) with the artificial codified systems and protocols used in computer communication. That is, while in the case of computer communication a message encapsulated by the sender system will always produce the same recovered message by a well-functioning receiver; matters are not so simple in the case of human communication, where the recovered meaning can be different from the speaker's meaning. In consequence, although it would be tempting to think that all highly codified communication systems work the same way, this presumption seems to be unfounded.

Therefore, even though the hypothesis that there is a communication code shared between the sender and the receiver systems is an absolutely natural and uncontroversial assumption for the case of artificial communication—because both the sender and receiver were designed so that the two of them shared the same communication code and protocols (Shannon 1949)—things are more puzzling in the case of living systems. The reason for this is simple: Shannon's model was strongly inspired by the transmission of messages in telecommunication systems, where the sender encodes content into a message that is transmitted through a channel to a receiver who then decodes the sender's message in order to recover the original content. Unfortunately, this is a narrow view of natural communication, since it draws heavily on signal processing as analogue for human communication and forgets the interaction existing between the speaker and the hearer, the existence of shared practices and fields of experience, and other elements mutually understood between the sender and the receiver, which contribute to the

decoding of messages by the recipient. These limitations gave rise to the emergence of code models that included interactive (Schramm 1954) and transactional (Watzlawick *et al.* 1967) elements. The problem is that the assumption that there are practices and fields of experience shared between the speaker and the hearer is almost as controversial as the thesis that there is a shared communication code.

The issue at stake in the different versions of the code model is whether the same communication code and protocols are shared between the speaker and the hearer[2]. In regard to this, two positions may be adopted for the case of human communication: (i) all human beings share the same communication code and protocols; or (ii) there is no such a thing as a communication code/protocol shared by all human beings. Nevertheless, each of these alternatives faces its own specific problem. On the one hand, case (i) confronts the *problem of variation*, which emerges as result of the fact that human beings are not wholly identical—because they are not equally designed and, also, their biographies and experiences are also different. This considered, it is hard to think how speakers and hearers may ever share a same communication code. On the other hand, case (ii) has to face up to the *problem of meaning*, given that in the absence of a common code, there is no guarantee that different individuals attribute the same meaning when using the same word, even though they belong to the same linguistic community (Kripke 1982).

All in all, it seems that alternative (i) constitutes a dead end due to an implausible assumption (i.e., the existence of a communication code shared by individuals), and that alternative (ii) could only be a feasible choice if the notion of shared meanings and contents is given up. As far as I see, these two views are threatened by a circularity problem: case (i) when the model is asked about the origin of the common code, and case (ii) when the model is asked about the origin of the shared meanings and contents.

3.2. The pragmatist inferential response

In order to overcome the problems of the code model, some pragmatists have argued for inferential models, as an alternative free of the shortcomings associated with the previous view. The idea is that an inferential model can get by without a common communication code, and without resorting to shared meanings or contents. More specifically, those pragmatists claim that an inferential approach to human communication could merely work on the basis of the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intentions, by means of inferential processes that make no use of a

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[2] As said above, this issue reaches to any other element thought to be shared between the sender and the recipient (e.g., practices, fields of experience, etc.)

shared code. As a result, they are disposed to accept recovered contents that are non-identical to those intended by the speaker.

This approach is particularly useful for the case of contextualism, according to which the comprehension processes can always depend on the context of use. In fact, if the comprehension process is based on the hearer's assumptions on the speaker's intentions, when those assumptions are thought to be dependent on each specific context the inferential model can be reasonably described as a contextualist view of human communication and cognition (Sperber and Wilson 1995).

According to the inferential model, human communication consists in a rational activity where the speaker tries to induce certain effects in her audience, and then the hearer reasons her way towards the recognition of the speaker's intentions in order to achieve those very same effects or results. Under this view the hearer is seen as a conversational partner trying to make inferences about what the speaker intends on the basis of evidence provided by context. Unfortunately, inferential models have to tackle the issue of how the speaker's intentions can be reliably recognized by the hearer when contents are not shared (and even worse, when the hearer cannot be sure that her context—or cognitive environment—is the same as the speaker's context).

With regard to the second question, pragmatists are willing to accept that both the speaker and the hearer operate within a mutual cognitive environment, that is, within the intersection of the cognitive environments of the hearer and of the speaker. In respect to the first issue, the recognition of intentions is usually conceived as a mindreading process where the participants in the communicative exchange are (i) aware that the other have a mind, and (ii) able to represent and read—or infer—its contents, through the recursive comparison of the contents of her own mind with her representation of the contents of the other's minds. Thus, it is fair to say that (recursive) mindreading entails reading the intentions present in the minds of the others. In consequence, so conceived human communication would consist in the hearer's successful mindreading of the intentions present in the speaker's mind

At this point, two main objections can be raised against the inferential models. Firstly, there is no reason to suppose that the speaker and the hearer always operate within a mutual cognitive environment. In this respect it could happen that the speaker's cognitive environment was different to the hearer's one, and that none of them realized. Second, it may be argued that the existence of an intention-recognition ability is as problematic as the existence of a content-sharing ability, so resorting to the recognition of intentions does not prevent the difficulties

originally present in the notion of shared content. This latter kind of critique—associated with the issue of how intentions can be recognized—have been put forward both against the general conception of the inferential model (Livet and Ridel 1994), and against some of the most popular contextualist articulations of it (i.e., the relevance theory) (Mazzone 2009).

The inferential model does not rest on the existence of a communication code shared between the speaker and the hearer, but in the hearer's capacities to figure out what the other is thinking (i.e., to recognize the speaker's intentions), based on her external behaviour, social interaction, etc. Nonetheless, in this case the problem is how to know when a successful inference has been carried out. As far as I see, (a) the problem of how the hearer may know that she has correctly recognized the speaker's intention, and (b) the problem of how the hearer can know that she has correctly grasped the speaker's meaning, are particular cases of a wider family, namely, the problem of knowing whether a subject is correctly following a rule (Kripke 1982). The idea is that both the speaker's intentions and the speaker's meanings may be identified with a rule governing a communicative exchange, so both of them face to the same kind of difficulties when trying to explain how the hearer can successfully recognize or grasp them. Or, in other words, both of them are threatened by Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's rule-following paradox (Wittgenstein 1953): on the one hand, the shared-content view of human communication when asked for the origin of the contents shared between the speaker and the hearer; on the other, the contextualist inferential approach to human communication when asked how intentions can be recognized.

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At this point, in order to explain how human communication could work, a common response is to resort to its function as a coordination device that allows individuals to coordinate action and secure goals in cooperative activities. In line with this conception, sometimes it is claimed that the main function of communicative events is creating understanding (e.g., do not say *fish* to mean *bird*) through cooperation, where understanding is defined as different people experiencing alignment or entrainment in their behaviors (Gasiorek and Aune 2020). Unfortunately, this leads to a notion of communication (i.e., the process by which people exchange stimuli in order to create mental states in the other similar to their own ones) that is not far from the traditional one, with all the problems it had. The issue is that the explanations of how people can align their behaviour when they engage in communicative cooperation usually resort to need to be aware of what the other conversational participants believe and intend, and of how it is the (mutual) cognitive environment. The problem is that we do not have direct access to the

other's thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and so on, so the hearer's inferences will have to be based on the external evidence she has at hand, namely, the speaker's utterance, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

As a result, our deductions about the other's mental contents and/or intentions are defeasible inferences, and in those cases misunderstandings may happen and—when they are discovered—speakers engage in negotiations in order to correct or minimize them (Rapaport 2003). Under this view it may be said that communicative success is achieved when those misunderstandings are identified and resolved, so the existence of a negotiation in process would be indicative of an unsuccessful communicative interaction for the nonce. Nonetheless, sometimes the participants in a conversation engage in a negotiation, even though the utterer's perlocutionary intentions have already been satisfied, and in other cases the hearer does not open a negotiation although she has not entirely understood the speaker's utterance. With regard to these cases, a possible response is that an utterance can have multiple purposes (associated to the different and simultaneous intentions of the speaker), so successful communication would consist in the comprehension of the uttered content along those distinct contextually-determined intentions (Pollock 2021)—and, many times, only part of those intentions are well understood.

4. An expectation-based conception of human communication

As said above, an adequate explanation of the success or failure of human communication has to work even when contexts—or cognitive environments—are different, and when contents and intentions are not shared between the participants in a communicative exchange (since they do not have direct access to the mental states of their conversational partners).

Now my aim is to show that successful communication is not a decisive problem for contextualism, because human cooperation may be explained in the absence of shared meanings, and also without the need of unfounded assumptions about our intention-recognition abilities. The proposed approach shares an important number of elements with the previously mentioned views of communication. Firstly, human communication is conceived as a codified communication system, but without a common code shared between the speaker and the hearer, since it is not possible to be sure which contents they share—as was presumed by the inferential models. Second, comprehension would operate on the basis of context-dependent inferential processes, where the intentions attributed to the other conversational participants play a key role. In this case, my proposal does not assume that the hearer is perfectly able to recognize the

speaker's intentions, in order to avoid falling into the problems suffered by the traditional inferential approaches. Third, it is accepted that when misunderstandings occur and are recognized, the conversational participants embark on negotiations to minimize them along the distinct dimensions associated to the contextually determined intentions attributed to the speaker by the hearer (in line with Rapaport's and Pollock's views).

However, the speaker's perlocutionary intentions are only directly known by the utterer, and in numerous cases they have not an obvious external manifestation on the part of the hearer. As a result, communication misunderstandings are often not evident for the participants within the communicative event, to the point that sometimes they will never be discovered. Having said that, an adequate definition of successful communication should take into account this possibility, together with the criterion of adequacy, according to which it should provide a diagnosis of the success or failure of communicative events that more or less fits our common-sense judgments (Pagin 2008). For this it is crucial to specify both the person who evaluates the success of a communicative interaction, and the period of evaluation. In regard to the person, it seems that the speaker is the most suitable evaluator, since she is the only one who has direct access to her own perlocutionary intentions. With respect to the period of evaluation, a straightforward solution is to judge that it extends from the beginning of the communicative interaction until the end of negotiations. Nevertheless, sometimes an extended period will contain additional elements to be considered in relation with the success or failure of the communicative exchange. My aim here is not to decide about the most appropriate period of evaluation, but merely to show that such an election can have an effect on the evaluation of whether communication has been successful or not.

Lastly, the evaluation of communicative success should be against the speaker's expectations about the hearer's external behaviour—which will obviously depend on the speaker's perlocutionary intentions—and not against those intentions themselves. My point is that success is not a matter of satisfying the utterer's perlocutionary intentions (as inferentialists claim), nor of the hearer's understanding of the utterance in a way in line with the speaker's intentions, that led to the perlocutionary effect in the hearer (as argued by Pollock). The reason is that many times there is no way for the speaker to know if her perlocutionary intentions have been satisfied, or the effect intended as result of the exchange lacks an evident external manifestation. Thence, my suggestion is to shift the focus—for evaluation purposes—from the speaker's intentions to her expectations about the external behaviour of the audience (for the cases of both success and failure in communication).

4.1. An interpreter-based model of communication

My idea is to conceive human communication in terms of an interpreter-based process that operates only on the basis of information undeniably available to the speaker. As a consequence, previous controversial notions—whose determination or origin is problematic (e.g., a common communication code, shared contents, meanings and contexts, or the ability to recognize intentions)—will not be taken for granted in this approach. Just as Rapaport said, people do not interpret what the others are privately thinking, since they can only interpret their public utterances and gestures. Therefore, my proposal is a conception of human communication whose success or failure is evaluated on the basis of public utterances, gestures and behaviors, together with other mental information unquestionably available to the interpreter. As far as I see, this is a more promising approach to explain human communication than the code model working on the basis of shared contents, and also than the inferential model based on the assumption that intentions can be recognized.

With this aim in mind, I take as starting point a view of communication and meaning in which, although both the speaker and the hearer assented to the same utterance, each of them could attribute a different meaning to it[3]. My proposal will be an interpreter-based procedural conception of human communication, articulated on the basis of a weak definition of its success or failure, which would be determined by the end conditions of the psychological processes in charge of the conversational exchange. More specifically, on the basis of a contextualist view that does not assume the existence of a context shared between the speaker and hearer (nor the sharing of intentions, goals, etc.), my thesis is that successful communication—between a sender and receiver—has occurred when both of them terminate the conversational exchange without considering it overtly failed. So conceived, the successful character of communication will be determined by the end point of a conversational exchange[4], and not by an agreement—or mutual understanding—among the speaker and her audience. In order to achieve that goal, a set of communicative principles will be needed, which will guide the conversational behavior of participants, and will establish when the communicative exchange ends.

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[3] Indeed, as suggested above, this is in line with other paths already opened in that direction—e.g., the relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995; Carston 2002), or the game-theoretic characterization of communication (Parikh 2000; Allott 2006)—as approaches that make use of the notion of context when explaining the phenomenon of communication.

[4] This end point of the conversational exchange can be identified with the end of the negotiations engaged in by the speaker and the hearer.

However, the end of the conversational process does qualify neither the speaker nor the hearer to presume that there exist contents or meanings shared between both conversational partners. As a result, in this kind of approach the problems of ignorance and error (Putnam 1970; Kripke 1980) should not be viewed as difficulties to be solved, but as natural and unavoidable results of any communication process.

4.2. Shifting the focus from intentions to expectations

Although as said above, in a contextualist view of communication it cannot be presumed that the speaker's intentions are known by the hearer, this does not prevent a Gricean conception of communication from being applied at this point (Grice 1957). Obviously, a slight change in the speaker's meaning is required, because in this view the utterer cannot expect that the audience recognizes her communicative intentions. The idea will be to characterize the speaker's and hearer's behavior in terms of the intentions attributed—by each of them—to the other participants in the conversation, which can differ from the real intentions of their conversational partners. This is a favorable strategy, because Gricean utterer's meaning may not crucially depend on the existence of shared real intentions, but on the mere attribution of them, which can bring the conversational exchange to an end. But why should be expectations a more reasonable basis for human communication than intentions? That is, it is required to show that communicative success is best understood when conceived from an expectation-based perspective.

With regard to this, my point is that expectations about the external response and behavior of the hearer are a more plausible starting notion than perlocutionary intentions, mainly due to the fact that they may be identified with a set of public manifestations (e.g., utterances, gestures, behaviors, etc.) of the hearer, which will be known by the speaker in order to evaluate the success—or failure—of the communicative exchange. By contrast, many times the speaker's intentions have no correspondence with a public reaction by the hearer, so the utterer has no way to determine if her intentions have been satisfied or not. This difference is crucial, since it avoids the aforesaid circularity threat when explaining how the evaluation of communicative success happens.

At this point it is important to emphasize that when communication is explained on the basis of the speaker's expectations, and messages are considered successfully recovered if the hearer's response is one of those foreseen by the speaker, then the satisfaction of those expectations do not need to be aligned with a fulfillment of the speaker's perlocutionary intentions. For instance, if the speaker issues an order and the hearer acknowledges that he has been given

a command but tells the speaker that she does not intend to follow it, communication could have been successful if refusal is one of the responses that the speaker has anticipated.

Consequently, a view of human communication based, not on the recognition of the other's intentions, but on the satisfaction of one own's expectations about the behavior of the other participants in a conversational exchange—in response to the own contributions—seems to lead to a more adequate account of the dynamics present in common communicative interactions.

4.3. Characterization of the speaker/hearer behavior in terms of expectations

To provide a valid characterization of human communication as an expectation-based process, the conversational behavior of both the speaker and the hearer should be described. In regard to this, a set of communicative principles that guide the conversational interaction is needed, which will be based on the production and satisfaction of expectations about the behavior of the other participants.

In this case my first claim is that the speaker produces an utterance together with a set of expected behaviors of her audience—in response to the speaker's utterance—which will be associated by the speaker with a successful interpretation of the message. Given that those expectations on the hearer's behavior are available for the speaker's cognitive system—because they were generated by the speaker's mind—and since the hearer's behavior is public, the speaker has at hand all the required elements in order to evaluate whether the produced expectations are satisfied or not. On the other hand, the hearer knows that the speaker expects to get something by means of her utterance—this is a very low controversial hypothesis—so the hearer may decide to pay attention, or not, to that demand, by means of the production of some kind of response.

Then, once the speaker's expectations are satisfied (i.e., if the hearer's response is one of those foreseen by the speaker), the speaker will be in a condition to assume that the message was successfully recovered by the hearer and, consequently, to consider as terminated the conversational exchange with her audience. When the conversation ends, both the speaker and hearer can be confident that the communicative intentions of the other conversational participant are close to their own view on them (i.e., to their expectations on them) even though both the speaker and the hearer could be wrong about that. Otherwise, that is, if the hearer's behavior did not belong to the set of responses anticipated by the speaker—or to the set of responses that

can be produced as result of a conversational implicature—the speaker could not assume that communication has been successful[5].

All things considered, the conversational exchange may end in two different ways:

(I) *End-of-conversation meeting the speaker's expectations*: When the hearer deals with the speaker's utterance, and the utterer's expectations are satisfied by the hearer's response[6].

(II) *End-of-conversation without meeting the speaker's expectations*: When condition (I) is not fulfilled and: (II.a) the hearer manifests that she does not wish to continue the conversational exchange, and the speaker accepts; or (II.b) the speaker manifests that she does not wish to continue the conversational exchange, and the hearer accepts. Under this view (II.a) and (II.b) are examples of non-successful communication, because the conversation ends without meeting the utterer's expectations.

By contrast, the conversation will continue when: (A) the hearer demonstrates that she has not understood the utterance—or its associated utterer's expectations—informs the speaker of it, and the conversation is resumed; or (B) the speaker shows that the hearer's response does not satisfy her expectations and, again, the conversational exchange continues.

Let us observe that an expectation-based conception of communication does not suffer from problems caused by a speaker-based measure of communicative success, where the speaker is the only judge of whether her expectations are satisfied or not. For instance, if the speaker is adamant that she uttered "could you please close the door?" expecting that the hearer closed the window, communication would not have succeeded from the point of view of the speaker, who would insist that the hearer has not closed "the door" (actually, the window), as requested. In this case, the subsequent conversational exchange between the speaker and the hearer would lead to elucidate the cause of the disagreement. And the same could be said of

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[5] What would happen in those communicative acts where the speaker cannot expect to have direct evidence about the hearer's behavior in response to her utterance (e.g., expression of conscientious objection, apology letter to a lost friend, etc.)? This is a special kind of communicative interaction, with only one transmission in a particular direction, with no feedback from the audience. In these cases, the speaker has expectations about what successful communication would be—in terms of the hearer's behavior—even though she will have no evidence of the audience's response, so communication ends whenever the utterer considers that her communicative act has a reasonable chance of success. Thus, according to my proposal, in this sort of cases communication would have happened, but it could not be said to have been successful or not.

[6] This will include cases where the end-of-conversation is within the utterer's expectations (e.g., cases where the speaker wishes that the hearer ceases or desists from continuing the conversational exchange).

cases where the hearer's behavior is a consequence of the recognition of a pragmatic implicature, and the speaker only expects responses based on the semantic content of the utterance. In these cases, the speaker realizes that the hearer's response does not belong to the set of expected behaviors (so communication would not have been successful), and informs the hearer of this, what should lead to a new conversational interaction to clarify the divergence between the hearer's response and the speaker's expectations.

Lastly, an approach like the one sketched out (i.e., a weak sense of successful communication based on the correct foresight of behaviors) could explain significant phenomena, such as human cooperation and apparent mutual understanding, in the absence of shared meanings, contents and concepts.

5. Conclusions

In this work I have examined the important difficulties faced by contextualism when trying to explain how successful communication works, without resorting to shared contents, meanings, or intentions. In regard to this, it has been shown that the two most popular views of human communication rest on problematic assumptions. On the one hand, the traditional code model presumes the existence of a communication code shared between the speaker and the hearer. On the other hand, inferential models rely on the hearer's inferential capacities to recognize the speaker's intentions. And, even though the latter are disposed to accept that the contents recovered by the hearer can be—and usually will be—non-identical to those intended by the utterer, I have argued that the problems of how the hearer may know that she has correctly identified the speaker's intentions, and of how the hearer can know that she has adequately grasped the utterer's meaning—or content—are particular cases of the same family, namely, the problem of knowing whether a subject is correctly following a rule. In consequence, both of them have to face the same kind of difficulties in their explanations of communicative success.

In response to these issues, I have proposed an alternative conception of human communication based on information undoubtedly available to the interpreter, like her own expectations about the audience behavior and the hearer's public response to the speaker's communicative contribution. As a result, my suggestion has been a weak definition of human communication, which is said to be felicitous when both the speaker and the hearer terminate their conversational interaction without considering it overtly failed. Communication so conceived may be described as a loosely codified communication system, which does not presume a common

communication code shared between the conversational participants, nor strongly relies upon the hearer's successful recognition of the speaker's intentions. My proposal was that the evaluation of communicative success should put the focus on the satisfaction of the utterer's expectations about the behavior of the other participants in a conversational exchange, and not specifically on the satisfaction of the speaker's intentions. Given that the speaker can always know if her expectations about the hearer's external behaviour have been satisfied or not, this would constitute a more adequate explanation of the success or failure of a conversational interaction, and of the dynamics present in any communicative exchange.

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