Argupolis – Argumentation Practices in Context. Ph.D. Program.
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Methodological issues: semantic and pragmatic instruments for argument analysis

June 3-7, 2010. Lugano. Hotel Colorado.

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The aim of this doctoral course is to show that the theoretical concepts and methodological procedures developed in contemporary formal, functional and cognitive approaches to the semantics and pragmatics of natural language can offer powerful instruments for understanding, analyzing and critically evaluating argumentation in ordinary text or talk. In fact, the claim of the course is that the accounts of the nature of the meaning representations and of the meaning construction processes provided by semantics and pragmatics can offer much more than what is used in the normal practice of many discourse analysts and argumentation scholars. In order to be successfully applied to the study of arguments, semantic and pragmatic instruments need both to be properly understood in their original theoretical context and to be carefully tuned by the analyst to fit the context, aims, and level of granularity of one's research. The course presents three examples of the application of concepts originating from different strands of contemporary semantic and pragmatic research to the analysis of argumentation in context, paying particular attention to the way in which these conceptual tools relate to the critical, evaluative and normative concerns that animate researchers who engage the functioning of actual arguments in their social and cultural contexts.

The lectures will focus on the following three topics, which will be explored in depth:

- **Louis de Saussure** and **Steve Oswald** (Université de Neuchâtel) ***Cognitive aspects of argument processing: fallacies and persuasion*** (6 hours)

In this course, the cognitive underpinnings of argument efficiency will be addressed. More precisely, we will provide the students with notions that help tackling fundamental theoretical questions such as: *Can cognitive features dedicated to natural language understanding explain intuitive soundness of arguments? Why are fallacious arguments efficient? What are the cognitive mechanisms that bias our judgment on argumentative relations?*

In order to address these complex questions, which relate to recent research in cognitive science, a first section of the class will be dedicated to a prominent cognitive approach of language processing and communication, Sperber & Wilson's *Relevance theory*, including some of its recent evolutions. The class will focus on the principles that allow picking up an interpretation, on their relations with the natural human ability of representing other people's intentions and on the cognitive shortcuts that allow humans to take risky communicative and interpretive decisions. A second section of the class is dedicated to the analysis of a number of fallacious argumentative relations and their potential success in light of cognitive biases identified in recent literature and which relate to the global principles of economy that also form the basis of pragmatic understanding. The third section of the class will be dedicated to the integration of these biases within a principle likely to guide human communication, namely the search for relevance, which is a fundamental device for cognitive efficiency but also an overarching cognitive bias in argumentation processing.

Readings

Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber (2004). Relevance Theory. In Horn, L.R. & Ward, G. (eds.) 2004 *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* Oxford: Blackwell, 607-632.

Maillat, D. & Oswald, S. (forth). "Constraining context: a pragmatic account of cognitive manipulation". In Critical Discourse Studies in Context and Cognition. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Saussure, L. de (2005). "Manipuation and cognitive pragmatics. Preliminary hypotheses". In Saussure, L. de & Schulz P. (eds), Manipulation and Ideologies in the Twentieth Century: Discourse, Language, Mind, 113-145.

Paul Chilton (Lancaster University) *Frames, metaphors and argumentation*
(6 hours)

Cognitive Semantics has developed the theory of frames and metaphors mainly in relation to the lexicon. However, there is scope for applying this body of theory to discourse and argumentation. In these courses we shall examine the theory of cognitive frames, relatively stable structured and often culturally based knowledge of the world, and critically review Lakoff's notion of 'deep' frames in relation to political argumentation. Frames often provide the input to the source domain of conceptual metaphors: accordingly, we shall review the theory and application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, as well as some aspects of Blending Theory and Mental Space Theory. In order to examine the role played by cognitive structures in argumentative discourse, Habermas's account of interactive argumentative discourse will be taken as a starting point. In particular, we shall look at 'validity claims' and consider their connection with the cognitive approach to language and discourse. Since argumentative discourse comes in various forms, we shall consider examples from diverse genres—newspaper narratives, political negotiation, and the inaugural speech of Barack Obama.

Readings

A. Cienki, Frames, Idealized CognitiveModels and Domains in D/ Gereerts and H. Cuykens The Oxford
    Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics

P. Chilton and M. V. Ilyin, 'Metaphor in Political Discourse: the Case of the "Common European House" ',
    Discourse and Society, 4 (1), pp. 7-31 G. Lakoff, *Don't think of an Elephant*

P. Chilton, Missing Links in Mainstream CDA: Modules, Blends and the Critical Instinct, in Ruth Wodak, Paul
    Chilton (eds.), 2005. *A New Research Agenda in Critical Discourse Analysis.Theory and
    Interdisciplinarity*. John Benjamins

P. Chilton, The Language-ethics Interface: Reflections on Linguistics, Discourse Analysis and the Legacy of
    Habermas, unpublished m.s.

- **Andrea Rocci** (Università della Svizzera italiana) *"Things that could be otherwise": modality and argumentation* (6 hours)

As Aristotle observed in his Rhetoric, ordinary argumentation deals with "things that could be otherwise". It is natural therefore that argumentation is seen as deeply intertwined with modality, the semantic category corresponding to the human ability of relating to non actual states of affairs; and that modality has been an important concern of modern argumentation theory since Toulmin (1958). The issue of modality has mainly been examined in relation to the qualification of standpoints, yet expressing degrees of certainty is but one

aspect of what modals do. Not only we express certainty or uncertainty towards a standpoint, we also express – sometimes subtly – how this standpoint relates to different kinds of evidence. But there is more. Every time we reason about action we ask ourselves what *must* be done in order to reach our goals, and what we *can* do, given our skills and resources in the present circumstances. And once our actions and interaction are placed in an institutional context – an interaction field, we also reflect on whether what can or must be done in view of the norms, shared goals and commitments that hold in the field.   Drawing both from the formal semantic theory of Relative Modality and from functionalist approaches to modality and evidentiality, we will show that modals are relational and context dependent and are functional to the establishment of argumentative discourse relations between utterances in discourse, both at a cognitive and at a semantico-ontological level. We will consider not only the role of epistemic modality (and of the closely related category of evidentiality) but also that of ontological (realistic), *deontic*, *bouletic* and *teleological* modalities, examining their relationship with different argumentative loci and different contexts of argumentative interaction ranging from the issuing of predictions in the financial media to the management of disagreement in mediation. We will examine the reconstruction problems posed by the context dependency of the modals, and we will sketch sketch an argumentatively relevant modal typology of standpoints revisiting the doctrine of the *status causae*.

Readings

Rocci, A. 2009. "Doing discourse analysis with possible worlds". In *Discourse. of course!,* ed. J. Renkema. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Rocci, A. 2008. "Modality and its conversational backgrounds in the reconstruction of argumentation". *Argumentation* 22, (2): 165-89.

Rocci, Andrea (2008). "Modals as lexical indicators of argumentation. A study of Italian economic-financial news". In *L'analisi Linguistica e Letteraria XVI - Special Issue: Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue* (pp. 577-619).

Toulmin, S.E. (2003 [1958]). *The Uses of Argument.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Website: *http://www.modality-in-argumentation.ils.com.usi.ch/*

Time Slots	Thursday June 3	Friday June 4	Saturday June 5	Sunday June 6	Monday June 7
8.00-9.00		Saussure	Rocci	FREE	Rocci
9.00-10.00		Saussure	Rocci		Rocci
10.00-11.00		Saussure	Rocci		Saussure
11.00-12.00		Saussure	Rocci		Saussure
12.00-13.00					
13.00-14.00					*Individual Tutoring*
14.00-15.00	Introduction	Chilton	*Individual Tutoring*		*Individual Tutoring*
15.00-16.00	Chilton	Chilton	*Individual Tutoring*		
16.00-17.00	Chilton	*Individual Tutoring*			
17.00-18.00	Chilton	*Individual Tutoring*			
18.00-19.00	Chilton	*Individual Tutoring*			