

Communication and Argumentation

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1 Introduction

Course themes

- Linguistic
- Retic
- Presentation Skills
- Argumentation (and Manipulation)
- Grant-writing
- How to write papers

How to learn communication (according to Cicero)

- Study the theory
- Copy the technique of good communicators
- Practice on communication

How we'll learn during the course

- Classes
- Labs
- MOOC (like coursera)
- Tutoring for the final project

Exam structure 60% of the grade from written test, 40% from project.

Written test will consist of 6 open questions. One of those **will be** "Find 4 examples of arguments in your field of study, identify and discuss them"

Project simulation of a proposal for PoliHub/Research Council

2 Communication: basic principles

Languages are made of signs. The existence of the concept implies the existence of an intelligence capable of relating two elements: **signifier** and **signified**. For example, fire by itself is just smoke, but intelligence can read it as a sign of a fire.

Signifier is the element used as a sign: the smoke in the example above

Signified is the element the sign stands for: the fire in the example above

2.1 Four big consequences of using signs

Allow to transmit knowledge beyond direct acquaintance Of course we acquire some of our knowledge by direct experience. Symbolical representation of languages allow knowledge to be transmitted even in absence of direct acquaintance.

This can be achieved because signs work by abstraction: from a concrete object we abstract the concept of it, and are able to use it as a sign.

Anyway, without direct acquaintance, no new knowledge can be generated

Allows to expand knowledge by combining concepts together Languages are like LEGO blocks: we can combine signs to obtain new ones. For example, *Not+Finite=Infinite*. The concept of infinite cannot be experienced ever, but we are able to get it combining other concepts.

We can create things that does not exist For example we can create

the concept of $Teleportation = \overset{\text{distance}}{\underbrace{Tele}} + \overset{\text{moving}}{\underbrace{Port}}$

We can lie

2.2 How signs work

What is a sign? It is composed by a signifier and a signified

Signifier is the element bringing a meaning

Signified the meaning

Signs are, however, arbitrary. Different types of arbitrariness exist:

Arbitrary of the signifier: If we all agree to call books "Kikoo", language would still work

Arbitrary of the signified: The same sign (word) can represent different objects: the italian word "porta" can be translated to "door" or to "brings"

2.3 What is a "text"?

Text is an extended structure of syntactic units, any meaningful linguistic production, both oral and written.

Text interpretation is mostly non verbal, as the verbal components are the little part.

Co-text is essential to understand the overall meaning. Co-text refers to the "text around". It is determined by both:

the other sentences: Aldo asked me 10€. $\begin{matrix} \text{He loaned me 5€} \\ \text{He loaned me 15€} \end{matrix}$. → The picked sentence determines if Aldo is kind or greedy.

the arrangement of other sentences: Louis is good. His father bought him a pc → pc is a reward
His father bought him a pc. Louis is good → good at using the pc

Con-text Is the world around the text. The context contains the cotext, but also includes elements of knowledge that are external from the text itself.

Encyclopedia represents our knowlegde of the world: without external knowledge wwe would not get any conceptual difference between green eyes and red eyes. But from our personal encyclopedia, we know that red eyes are uncommon, and are maybe a sign for a disease, while green eyes are pretty normal.

2.4 Elements of good communication

Reference Communication must be understandable: a good communicator must be able to identify a common ground for communication (common knowledge).

Common ground mistakes

- Taking for granted not shared knowledge
- Explaining knowledge that is already known

3 Rethoric

Rethoric ("the art of speaking") is born in the greek democracy.

It is an art, with principles and rules.

By itself, rethoric is neutral, but it can be used to both manipulate or to persuade.

Bad use of rethoric In greek there was a rethor, Corax, who instructed another man, Tisias, on rethoric.

Tisias refused to pay Corax, and in court he defended itself saying "If i loose the trail, I don't have to pay Corax, as he was not a good teacher. If I win the case, I don't have to pay Corax by law".

Elements of rethorics: We will divide rethoric into substeps:

- Finding good arguments
- Arranging arguments properly
- Choose the best style for the speech
- Put the audience at the center of our attention
- Calibrate our communication based on the common ground

3.1 Invention: finding what to say

Invention is finding what to say o create our communication. Invantion is brainstorming.

Ancient orators suggest to take into consideration three aspects:

ethos: the credibility of the speaker

pathos: the effects on the audience

logos: the facts about the things under discussion

For example, in a typical project proposal people focuses a lot on thetechnical facts (logos). A level up is to point out how you will be capable of running the project (ethos) and the benefits the project will bring to the company (pathos)

Prepare to objections is another important phase: anticipating objections allows us to reply brilliantly, avoiding to freeze and create an embarrassing situation.

It is also useful, for our own organization, to categorize the possible objection, in order to be more efficient in preparing the answers and in remembering it

Anticipate wishes What is the audience wishing? Anticipating the wishes allows us to create a sensation of satisfaction, which will lead to a positive overall perception

Brain-mapping After we think we gathered enough material, we want to group it. A possible grouping may be ethos-pathos-logos, but also more domain-specific groupings are possible
Grouping allows us to check whether we have enough of everything.

Conclusion Invention is crucial. Being essentially brainstorming, it works better if performed in group. Also, keep in mind that invention will always be "opened", it will not end after the first time you perform it. The contents will change overtime, influenced by new information. Some new topics may emerge, some other may become not relevant.
Finally, keep in mind that invention takes time. Ideas come where they want, not when you command

A Communication Tips

Acronyms must always be explained at least once.

Correctness of grammar and semantic.

Be informative Saying "he has 2 eyes, 1 mounth" is useless when describing a person.

Be relevant ensure to answer any open question, be it explicit or implicit.

B Likely exam questions/arguments

Find 4 example of arguments in your fiels, identify and discuss them

Ambiguity of signs 2.2