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3 Deceptive Miscommunication Theory (DeMiT): A New Model for the Analysis of Deceptive Communication

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Abstract: Deceptive communication has been recently studied by many scholars, both in naturalistic studies in the field and in experimental research programs carried out in the laboratory, but this scientific domain remains devoid of a viable theory.

These theoretical perspectives risk creating a sort of "mythology" about deception as a separate communicative domain, characterized by distinct and specific verbal and nonverbal features.

The present chapter intends to overcome this deception mythology and offer a viable model which can explicate the main characteristics of deceptive communication and the local management of the deceptive message in its different expressions. The framework in which we move is the *miscommunication as a chance theory* (MaCHT) proposed by Anolli. According to the theory herein followed, deception is a kind of miscommunication and a *chance* in communication terms, since deceptive miscommunication greatly enhances the degrees of freedom available to the communicator. Within this perspective we mean to propose a new model, called the *Deceptive Miscommunication Theory* (DeMiT). The main theoretical points of this model will be sketched out in the present chapter.

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3.1 Introduction

Deceptive communication has been the object of much study and research in these last 30 years, but, as McCornack [1] clearly points out, this scientific domain remains devoid of viable theory. Two main lines of research have been developed: naturalistic studies in the field to analyze spontaneous lying behavior and experimental research program carried out in the laboratory. In this second line, among the various theoretical models formulated by scholars, we can mention the Information Manipulation Theory (IMT) proposed by Lapinski [2], McCornack [3], McCornack, Levine, Solowczuk, Torres, and Campbell [4]; the Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) advanced by Buller and Burgoon [5], and Burgoon, Buller, Guerrero, Afifi, and Feldman [6]; the social model of lying presented by Bradac, Friedman, and Giles [7]; studies about the nonverbal aspects of deceptive speech act suggested by Buller, Burgoon, White, and Ebesu [8], and Ekman [9]. Differing and often conflicting between each other, these models have highlighted some distinct aspects of deceptive communication.

According to IMT, which reverses Grice's maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relevance, Manner) regulating conversational exchanges, the deceptive message derives from speakers "transforming" relevant information, but it fails to explicate this purported transformation process and**,** as Jacobs, Dawson, and Brashers [10] pointed out**,** it confuses three distinct issues: a) deceptive message production, b) deceptive message features, c) interlocutor interpretation of such a message.

In its turn, IDT is grounded on a large set of formal statements concerning deception variables, such as suspicion, behavioral leakage, communicative strategies, relational intimacy and the like. Deceivers strategically control the information in their deceptive messages with the purpose of presenting themselves behaviorally as expressing truthfulness and veracity, since they are engaged "in greater strategic activity to manage information, behavior, and image [than truth-tellers]" [5, Proposition 3]. However, non strategic unconscious leakage cues (like arousal and nervousness, negative affect and incompetent communication performance) can reveal deception [8, 6]. According to DePaulo, Ansfield, and Bell [11], despite extensive research and numerous theoretical assumptions, IDT also fails to explain the production mechanisms responsible for deceptive message encoding, and the cognitive processes implicated in deceptive message interpretation.

Firstly, we have to question the ecological validity of these current theories and ask ourselves how much their findings resemble naturalistic processes in everyday deceptive communication. Secondly, both IMT and IDT risk building a sort of "mythology" about deception as a separate communicative domain, characterized by distinct and specific verbal and non verbal features. According to McCornack [1], these "hopeful myths" are:

- *the encoding of deceptive messages entails active, strategic, and detailed cognitive processing,*
- *the encoding of deceptive messages requires greater cognitive load than the encoding of truthful messages,*
- *the encoding of deceptive messages is more physiologically arousing than that the encoding of truthful messages,*
- *there is an identifiable and consistent set of deception-arousal-based behavioral cues that deceivers "leak" when encoding deceptive messages, human beings are innately capable of deception detection, and*

- *deceptive messages have specifiable characteristics that render them distinct from truthful messages.*

The aim of the present chapter is to overcome this deception mythology and to offer a viable model which can explicate the main characteristics of deceptive communication and the local management of the deceptive message in its different expressions. The theoretical domain in which we move is the *miscommunication as a chance theory* (MaCHT), as sketched out by Anolli (Chapter 1, this volume). According to the perspective herein followed, deception is a kind of miscommunication and a *chance* in communication terms, since deceptive miscommunication greatly enhances the degrees of freedom at the communicator's disposal. It represents another route to express the speaker's sensations, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and desires; likewise, at communication level, it may be really advantageous to have the chance of hiding, omitting, concealing or, simply, blurring information. After all, truth is not a matter of black or white, and deceptive communication may be an opportunity both in a Machiavellian, opportunistic sense and in an everyday relational situation.

Within this perspective we mean to propose a new model, called the *Deceptive Miscommunication Theory* (DeMiT). The main theoretical points are the following: a) a deceptive miscommunication theory should be included in a general framework capable of explaining the default communication; therefore, deceptive miscommunication is neither an alternative to truthful communication, nor an exception nor yet a violation regarding a standard paradigm of default communication; b) deceptive miscommunication is not a homogeneous but a heterogeneous communication field, with different kinds of deception and deceptive message features; c) deceptive miscommunication is managed by an intentional stance characterized by an internal gradation; these degrees of intention serve to arrange and monitor a deceptive message design suitable in a given situation and a contingent relational web; d) the deceptive message follows the same mechanisms and processes of mental planning and execution as the default communication message; e) deceptive miscommunication is context-bound, then requests a "local management" of conversational exchanges, because every context is constructed *in situ*; here a distinction may emerge between naive ("bad") deceivers and skilled ("good") ones; f) deceptive miscommunication, like default communication, uses different kinds of linguistic and nonverbal expressions, although they may be qualified by distinctive communication patterns in certain circumstances; g) a useful explicative key to understand deception mechanisms is given by the link between deception and self-deception.

The aim of the present chapter is to sketch the DeMiT, starting with the deception "family" and the "resemblance of family" in deceptive phenomena, and following with the intentional framework of deceptive miscommunication in order to point out the intentional gradation involved in it. In this section we will also see some motives implicated in deception and how children manage to understand deceptive actions. In the next session we will take into consideration the cognitive design of deceptive miscommunication, examining the "cognitive load hypothesis", making the distinction between the cognitive processes implied in low-content and high-content deceptive acts, and searching a contextual management conception of the deceptive act. After looking at deceptive miscommunication as a relational game and communicative inter-act (section 5), we will take into consideration the different modes of expressing deception, examining both IMT and IDT, as well as examining closely the linguistic styles of deceptive miscommunication. The Machiavellian attitude and self-deception seen as devices for skilled deceptive miscommunication are the topics of the last section. In this chapter we

will only allude to the emotional aspects of deception.

3.2 The "family" of deceptive acts

Deception as an articulated and complex miscommunication act is an emblematic pattern of adaptive behavior in interpersonal relational management, with the aim of influencing others' beliefs, as it is outlined by Bond, Omar, Pitre, Lashley, Skaggs, and Kirk [12], and by Buller and Burgoon [13]. In this way the deceptive act, as it occurs within everyday conversations, is both universal and casual. In the often quoted naturalistic study by Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead [14] 61.5% of utterances reported by the 130 participants were, somehow, deceptive, even if less than one sixth were outright lies. Also DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, and Epstein [15] found in a naturalistic study that college students during a week's observation told lies "in approximately one out of every three of their social interactions, and people from the community lied in one out of every five social interactions" (p. 16). These lies were not very serious and did not imply a large cognitive effort in planning and telling; subjects also reported that they expected to be believed and did not worry too much if they would be caught out by the deceived. In the everyday context the majority of deceptive messages involve subtle and complex combinations of truthful and deceptive information [3] and are told in an unplanned and simple manner [15].

In contrast to naturalistic studies, laboratory assessments tackled the prepared deception. Especially in the lie domain, strategic moves and countermoves by deceivers and deceived were discovered in experimental studies, and a self-conscious deliberative process has needed to lie [5]. The lie is considered as an intentional and conscious act to deceive another person who is unaware and unwilling. To this end, the need to arrange and execute a complex communicative plan is linked to the complexity of an intentional plan; that is, the speaker's intention to make the interlocutor deliberately believe what he/she knows not to be true.

Instead of considering the contraposition between field and laboratory research as exclusively a theoretical one, in the DeMiT, in line with MaCHT perspective (Anolli, Chapter 1, this volume), we prefer to deal with deception as a *"family"* of miscommunication phenomena and processes. In this "family" we can consider self-deception and pathological frequent deceptiveness; prepared lies (mainly managed to avoid sanctions) and unprepared lies (to face up to an embarrassing situation), pedagogic lies (for example, told to a child for reassurance) and white lies (aimed at managing a threatening-face situation). For this reason truth and falsehood are not always separated by a dichotomous line and in many situations they are mixed together.

In particular, crossing the broad distinction of "having the interlocutor believe the false" and "not having the interlocutor believe the true", we obtain four deceptive "subfamilies": a) *omission* (the speaker omits to give the addressee some information that he/she thinks or knows is relevant to the addressee's goals); b) *concealment* (the speaker withholds and hides some information by giving the addressee some other divergent/diversionary information that is true but not relevant, in order to perpetuate false assumptions in him/her); c) *falsification* (the speaker deliberately conveys to the addressee some information that he/she believes false); d) *masking* (the speaker withholds some information by giving the addressee some other false information).

We can continue this analysis of the deception "family" and see we can *lie telling the truth*, as in the case of half-truth (the speaker only refers part of the truth or the truth is

minimized) and exaggeration (the speaker provides more information than the truth called for). Moreover, truthful messages can be used to deceive by causing deceptive implicatures on the grounds of false presuppositions, as it is outlined by Jacobs, Dawson, and Brashers [10], and by Castelfranchi and Vincent [16]. In general, the different kinds of deceptive forms here mentioned are covered by the main distinction proposed by Chisholm and Feehan [17]: *deception by commission* and *deception by omission*.

It is worth pointing out that deceptive "subfamilies" and other related phenomena do not constitute "deception types" in the DeMiT. Speaking of "deception type" means accepting a priori taxonomy, in which the deception categories would be discrete and characterized by clear, definite and inflexible boundaries. Instead, according to DeMiT, there is a continuum among the different kinds of deceptive "subfamilies": as Wittgenstein [18] says, there is *"a resemblance of family"*, in which the boundaries are fuzzy and vague, even though this "resemblance" does not deny the presence of great differences in the deception system.

Now we must ask which, if any, could be common denominators in this range of deceptive forms. We think that DeMiT could be useful in this task.

3.3 Intentional framework in deceptive miscommunication

According to the prototypical perspective proposed by Coleman and Kay [19], the lie is defined by three basic features: a) the *falsehood* of the content of the utterance; b) the *awareness* of such falsehood; and c) the *intention* to deceive the addressee. But we realized that falsehood is not always necessary to produce a deceptive message, as you can tell a lie telling the true. Moreover, you can tell a falsehood by lying, or by making a mistake. He/she who mistakenly makes a false statement does so unknowingly (thinking of he/she is saying the truth) and successively learns the truth; instead, he/she deliberately tells a lie, first knows the truth and then tells the lie. As a consequence, the intention to lie is the essential feature of deceptive communication, as it is shown by Sweetser [20], and Anolli, Balconi, and Ciceri [21]. Anolli and Balconi [22] suggested that, whether or not a deceptive act is successful (the addressee is actually deceived) does not alter the fact that a deceptive act taken place; in the same way, the fact that the addressee does not believe what the deceiver has said, does not modify the fact that the speaker has deceived. According to Grice's [23] speech acts theory, the performative effect does not alter the illocutory force of the deceptive speech act.

Speaking of intention is a delicate subject. As Anolli (Chapter 1, this volume) pointed out, we have to consider different kinds of intention: referential, informative, and communicative, as well as the intentional gradation. Intentional stance is a matter of degree in the communicative process, since intentions are directly proportional in their strength to the informative content of the message, as it is outlined by Jaczczolt [24, p. 68]. In deceptive miscommunication, according to the DeMiT, we theoretically have different layers of intention: a) *covert (hidden) intention* (the speaker intends to deceive the addressee by manipulating the information, but this intention must not be revealed); b) *overt (ostensive) intention* (the speaker intends to convey the manipulation of information to the addressee). This second intentional layer is, in its turn, twofold: b1) *informative intention* (the speaker wants to give the addressee the manipulated information as if it were true); b2) "*sincerity" intention* (the speaker wants the addressee to believe that what he has said is true, in order to respect the Sincerity Rule of Searle [25]: "I want you believe that I believe what I am saying to you").

Therefore, deceptive communication appears to require at least a second-order intentional system and in certain cases (especially in prepared lies) a third-order intentional system. In this second-order intentional layer we have to further distinguish between the *deception family* and the *joke family* (such as teasing, irony, pretence, parody, sarcasm, banter, etc.). In the former the speaker intends to deceive the addressee, whereas in the latter the speaker has the intention not to deceive but to be disbelieved. The speaker's intention to deceive is therefore defined in terms of what the speaker *wants* the addressee to *think*. The deceitful speaker wants the listener to think that the statement is true, while the joking speaker wants the listener to know that the statement is false (see figure 3.1).

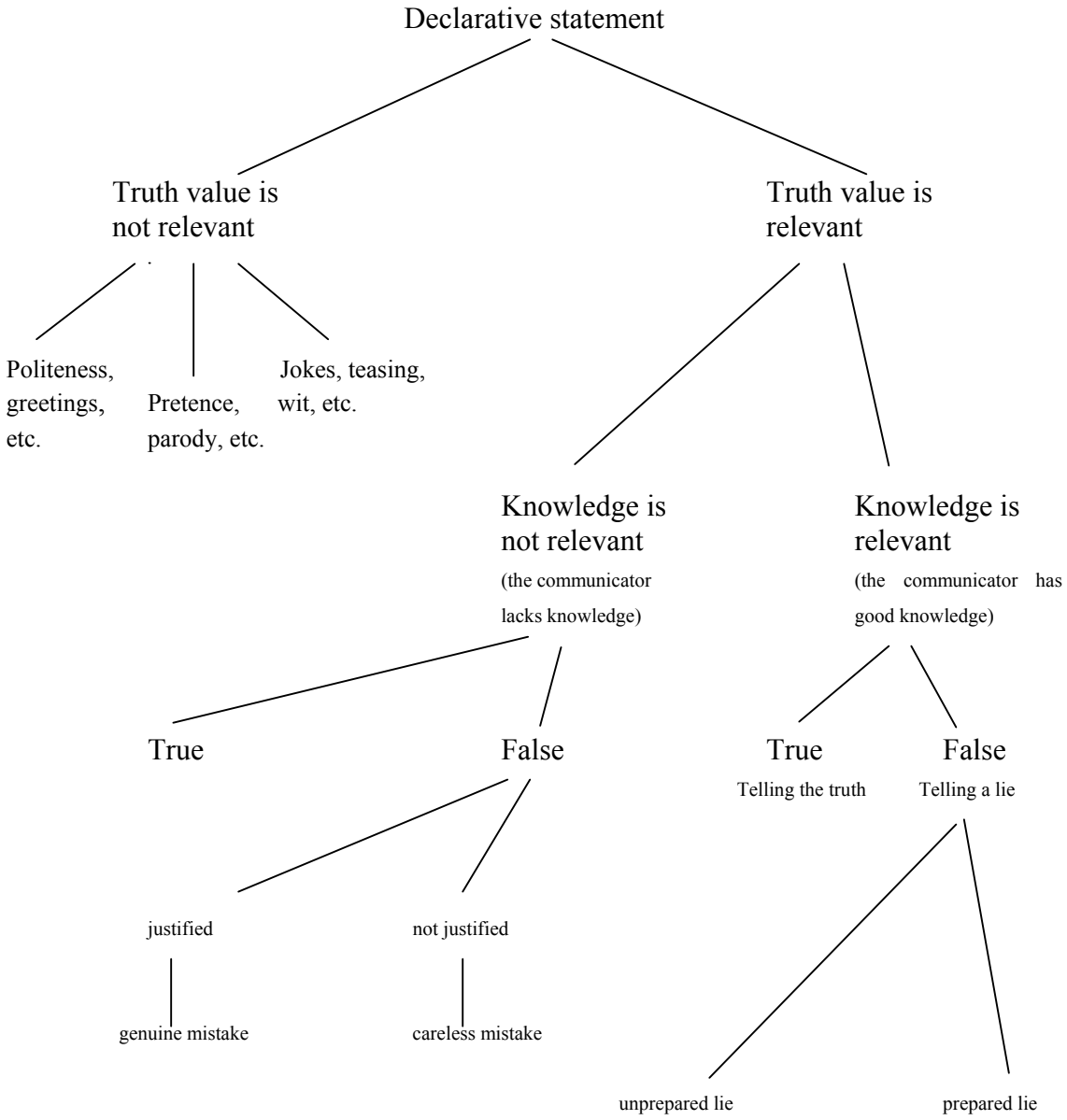

Figure 3.1. Route of miscommunicative acts of deception

But the second-order intentional layer is a common and ubiquitous feature in human communication, grounded on what Dennett [26] defines as the intentional stance and *theory of mind*. In everyday conversations people normally attribute beliefs, motives, desires, and intentions to the mind of others, whatever they are saying or doing. They have

a mental representation of the others' mental representations, that is, they have *metarepresentation*. This *mindreading* implies intersubjectivity (like the sharing of subjective states and common reference), perception of intentionality (the idea of others as animate, self-directed, and goal-oriented), and attribution of mental states to others. As Whiten [27, p. 63] pointed out, also mindreading is graded, and this gradation corresponds to the depth of penetration that the mindreader makes into the mind of the other, starting from epistemic seeing to arriving at false belief ascription. According to Perner [28], in this last condition children achieve a truly "representational theory of mind" around four years of age.

Intentional stance and metarepresentation are inherently recursive processes, tied to belief-embedding: a representation (or intention) can refer to another representation (or intention) that, in turn, refers to another, and so forth ad infinitum.

According to the DeMiT, deceptive miscommunication is not the psychological counterpart of truthful communication, and is not a separate communicative type needing a distinct message-production mechanism. *Intentional gradation*, requested by any communicative act, can also manage different kinds of deceptive message, from white lies to prepared and bold-faced ones. The framework of deception as a miscommunicative act implies an increase of the degree of freedom on the part of the speaker to choose a definite path of message design according to context expectancies and cultural standards. Moreover, intentional system and gradation operating in deceptive miscommunication produce a sort of *intentional opacity* in the speaker: except in bold-faced lies, he can hide his/her deceptive act as a result of lack of information, a mistake, poor judgement, a moment of bewilderment, etc. In this way he/she can "save his/her face".

Likewise, intentional stance can also be useful in understanding both *deception motives* and deception comprehension in children. Concerning the former, the deceptive message, like any communicative or miscommunicative act, has the intent to influence another person in line with the adaptive perspective of human behavior. Here we are not interested in building a taxonomy of motives for deception, as recently proposed by O'Hair and Cody [29]; what we are interested in is to point out the combination of intentional gradation and motivational range.

The deceptive act is not gratuitous, suggested by the Evil One or caused by madness; it is the outcome of an evaluation of the contingent situation in order to optimize the possibilities and reach a convenient and preferable solution in terms of costs and benefits. In any case, the deceptive message is generated by rational people, affected, however, not by an Olympian but by a *bounded rationality*, as it is called by Simon [30]. As the study of heuristics and judgement under uncertainty proposed by Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky [31] has extensively shown, they can only reach the so-called *"local best"*, that is, the solution that maximizes opportunities and minimizes risks at a certain time.

In this perspective one can resort to a deceptive message in order to acquire or protect one's own resources (money, time, possessions, privacy, etc.), or to manage the relationship with a partner (initiate, continue, or avoid interaction; avoid conflict and embarrassment, avoid punishment, leave take, avoid self-disclosure, etc.), or else to maintain or enhance self-esteem (save one's face, improve one's social position, increase one's social desirability, etc.). These motives are included in the *benign fabrication* of deceptive acts, so called by Goffman [32]. On the contrary, there are other motives defined by Goffman as *exploitative fabrication*. Among them, we can mention the deceptive message with the purpose of gaining at the expense of other people, and manipulating or harming them. Revenge, vindictiveness, retaliation, sabotage, and hatred can serve as examples of exploitation and malevolent deception. These and other indefinite numbers of

motives underlying deception confirm the flexibility and variability of deceptive communication as context-bound and dependent on the contingent relational web.

In a naturalistic study DePaulo and Kashy [33] found that individuals would tell fewer lies per social interaction to the people to whom they felt close, and they would feel more uncomfortable when they lied to those people. Because altruistic lies can communicate caring, DePaulo and Kashy [33] found also that relatively more of the lies told to friends would be altruistic rather than self-serving, whereas the reverse would be true of lies told to acquaintances and strangers.

Moreover, intentional stance and belief representation appear useful in explaining the development of the *comprehension of deceptive acts in children*. Most scholars agree with Sodian's [34] perspective, that four-year-old children are capable of distinguishing lies from jokes, since at this age they already possess the concept of belief and can understand deception as manipulation of others' behavior by influencing their beliefs about reality. Early on they can distinguish deception from teasing in terms of the speaker's intention to influence the addressee's behavior.

However, important precursors of a theory of mind are found earlier than four years of age. As Cadinu and Kiesner [35] pointed out, three-year-old children, engaged in pretence and deception situations, demonstrated a significant understanding of other people's mental states. Likewise, Chandler and Hala [36], and Hala and Chandler [37] found that actively involving three-year-old children in planning deception facilitated performance on false-belief questions. In fact, when children simply watched the execution of deceptive planning (where to relocate an object), they did not differentiate whether the object was moved for deceptive or practical reasons. In contrast, children who had strategically planned a deception were markedly better at answering questions about another's false beliefs than those who simply witnessed the object transfer. Moreover, it is worth noting that, according to Leekam [38], children of four years understand desires and intentions before they understand beliefs.

With regard to ability in active deception, in a recent naturalistic study it was observed that three-year-old children (and perhaps even younger ones) resorted to everyday deceptions in a varied, flexible, and context appropriate manner, too complex to be "blind" learned strategies. Children's deceptive skills are more likely to develop from pragmatic need and situational exigencies than from conceptual development; as Newton, Reddy, and Bull [39] pointed out, they may learn to lie in the same way as they learn to speak. This learning continues till adolescence.

To sum up, intentional gradation and metarepresentation (theory of mind) are basic features which explain not only standard communication, but also deceptive miscommunication both in everyday conversations (unprepared lies) and in significant situations (prepared lies). Higher order intention, belief state, and message forms are strictly intertwined between them to form the center of deceptive miscommunication.

3.4 The cognitive design of deceptive miscommunication

3.4.1 The "cognitive load hypothesis"

Buller, Burgoon, White, and Ebesu [8], DePaulo, Ansfield, and Bell [11], and Vrij, Semin, and Bull [40] have pointed out that the deceptive message is more cognitively difficult and demanding than the truthful message, since the fabrication of a plausible and convincing lie that is consistent with the contingent situation and everything the addressee knows is a

laborious cognitive task. Referring to this topic, McCornack [1] advances the *cognitive load hypothesis*, of which he criticizes two basic assumptions: a) according to Zuckerman and Driver [41], deceivers "must construct a message from scratch, and the content of the message must be both internally consistent and compatible with what the listeners already know"; b) deceptive communication is cognitively more difficult because of the number of constraints placed upon the formulation of the lie, as Greene, O'Hair, Cody, and Yen [42] sketched out.

In his criticisms McCornack [1] is absolutely right, showing the theoretical fragility of this dichotomous distinction between deceptive and truthful communication. Saying that deceptive messages are constructed "from scratch" means that truthful messages are not built from scratch and so they are the result of a preformed message design; but this statement is untenable from the point of view of any contemporary model of message production, as it is shown by O'Keefe & Lambert [43]. In the same way, assuming that deceptive messages are internally consistent presupposes that truthful messages could lack internal consistency. This statement is also untenable. Likewise, stressing the high number of constraints in deceptive communication means a failure to recognize the mental convenience and opportunity to resort to deception in certain complicated situations, in which truth appears much more cognitively laborious than a lie.

However, on a more advanced level, the problem of the cognitive demand of deceptive miscommunication remains in its entirety. According to DeMiT, we can assume that: a) the cognitive load of the deceiver arises as a function of the entity and gravity of the deceptive contents; b) the cognitive load of the deceiver depends on the context significance. To develop these assumptions, first of all we have to distinguish between *prepared* and *unprepared deception*. The former is cognitively planned in advance and examined by the deceiver at least in its main aspects; the latter is spontaneously said, often as the answer to an unexpected question by the interlocutor, without any mental planning. This distinction is not dichotomous; rather, there are different degrees of planning and preparation in telling a lie.

Secondly, we have to introduce a further distinction between *high-* and *low-content deception*. The former concerns a serious topic, is said in an important context, and is characterized by the presence of notable consequences and effects for the deceiver or for the addressee or even for other people. The latter regards a minor topic, can be said in any kind of context, and does not have consequences or, if any, they are of scarce importance. As for the previous distinction, high- and low-content deception is a continuum, and not a dichotomous matter. We have to investigate this subject further.

3.4.2 High- and low-content deceptive acts

In the DeMiT we hypothesize that *low-content deceptive acts* can be said almost automatically, without any anticipatory planning or careful, conscious thought, especially in everyday conversation and between intimates. In this domain white and pedagogic lies are included, as well as different kinds of concealment, omission, and evasive message. Often they are unprepared and are justified by the deceiver in the name of cultural standards and the addressee's (or others') interests (altruistic lies). In these situations the deceptive intents are not really to be deceitful, but they are benign and benevolent in order to promote or maintain the relational web. Concerning this aspect, Lindskold and Walters [44] carried out a research on college students' perception of the ethical evaluation of deception and found a hierarchy of "acceptability" for deceptive acts in a balancing of the costs/benefits of the deceiver with the costs/benefits for the deceived target. Moreover,

low-content deceptive messages are likely to take place in contexts characterized by non-face-threatening (or low face-threatening) condition. The deceiver can feel at his/her ease in these contexts and does not need particular cognitive demands in generating this kind of deceptive message. It is something taken for granted.

Instead, another type of deception consists of *high-content deceptive acts*, since they have serious effects and consequences for both the deceiver and the deceived. The deceiver runs the risk of "losing face" and being treated as dishonest and untrustworthy, if his/her deceptive act is uncovered or detected. The detection of a lie intrinsically implies a threat to the deceiver's image and an attack to his/her self-esteem, generating in him/her negative self-conscious emotions such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment. He can be openly accused by the addressee, who can have feelings of aggression and retaliation, bewilderment, and lingering suspicion. The deceived, in his/her turn, runs the risk of being harmed or hurt in his/her interests to deceiver's advantage.

Because high-content deceptive acts bear high costs both for deceiver and deceived, there must be good reasons for producing them. Generally, they are likely to happen in complicated relational situations and in conflicting or face-threatening contexts, in which a problem of *disclosure* arises, with a dilemma like this: is it better tell the truth and the salient information, recognize the risks connected with sincere and honest disclosure and choose a way in which the truth can be presented in a acceptable manner, or tell a deceptive message, recognize the penalties associated with insincere and dishonest disclosure and prepare information suited for contextual constraints? Or choose a middle course?

In any case, the speaker has to face up to high cognitive demands in both alternatives, since, telling the truth or telling a lie, he has to fabricate a message with the lowest risk and penalty. For this basic reason, most people resort to a kind of "in-between" message, which involves subtle and complex packaging of both false and truthful elements [3]. True and false are meshed each other, so that it becomes impossible to tell them apart.

Focusing our attention on cognitive demands for high-content deceptive acts, we can see that telling a high-content lie requires considerable cognitive complexity, since manipulating information necessitates careful mental planning. This cognitive complexity lies in the discrepancy between private knowledge and public statement: according to Anolli and Ciceri [45] the deceiver *knows the truth* (which he/she does not tell), but publicly *tells a lie* (which he/she does not believe, but has to make the hearer think that he/she does believe it).

How can this cognitive demand for a high-content deceptive message appear? As we have already seen in section 3.2, there are no fixed and universal signals of deceptive communication. It would be so easy to detect all the liars in the world, with no need to resort to the lie-detector! Each speaker has learned his/her own communicative style in telling lies, as he/she has learned other communicative styles of persuading people, defending him/herself, bargaining, seducing, etc. If one looks for these signals as compelling evidence of the cognitive load in deceptive miscommunication, one is on the wrong track.

Instead, there are different and flexible communicative modes for deception; they can also be the opposite. Take, for instance, hand movements: some people show a decrease in hand movement during deception due to the cognitive demand, while others show an increase, as it is shown by Ekman, O'Sullivan, and Matsumoto [46], and by Vrij, Akehurst, and Morris [47]. It is not a matter of a universal and reflexive-like signal, but it depends on various factors. Among others, individuals with high public self-consciousness (i.e. the

ability to become aware of another's perspective and to act from that perspective) and high self-control make fewer hand movements during deception compared to truth-telling [47].

Likewise, in high-content deception there is a rise in the number of shorter and more recurrent pauses than in low-content deception or truth [45]. This phenomenon has been already observed in purely linguistic tasks in which frequent interruptions in the utterance by filled or unfilled pauses are the sign of a complex linguistic task, as it is outlined by Goldman-Eisler [48], and Rochester [49]. In the same way, studies by Berger and Jordan [50] on the association between planning difficulties and verbal fluency highlight a significant correlation between the number of pauses and the level of difficulty in generating a speech that will fulfill one's aim.

The packaging of personal cognitive processes and the systems of signaling combined with high-content deceptive acts are learned during one's own learning contexts and are the result of one's own experience. It is a matter of micro-culture (or idioculture), given by the primary (i.e. family) and secondary (i.e. school, peer group) social systems of socialization. One can learn to stare at the addressee while deceiving; another can learn to avoid the mutual gaze. One is prompt in answering an unexpected question; another has to prepare his/her speech taking care over details.

It is likely that within a high-content deceptive miscommunication the tense relationship with the partner could generate an *emotional arousal*, produced by the fear of being detected and of "losing face". According to Tagney and Fischer [51], this arousal especially concerns *negative self-conscious emotions*, like guilt, shame and embarrassment. Shame and embarrassment are "toxic" emotions, aroused by the risk of being disapproved or condemned by the addressee, as well as by being inadequate by cultural standards, whereas guilt, due to consciousness of the transgression of moral and conventional norms, can lead, in some cases, to the spontaneous confession of one's own deception and the wish to make amends.

All in all, the segmentation of the deception "family" in subgroups has enabled us to shed some light on cognitive demand. According to DeMiT, as for truthful speech, deception requires an extensive range of cognitive effort and the speaker has to choose the more suited communicative path as the occasion demands.

3.4.3 Deceptive message design

For the analysis of deceptive message design as a communicative act we can start from the Q Principle and the R Principle which stress the dialectic opposition between "speaker's economy" (use as few words for concepts as necessary) and "auditor's economy" (use as many expressions as messages to make the communication clear). Horn [52] defines them in the following manner:

The Q Principle:
Make your contribution sufficient. Say as much as you can (given R).
The R Principle:
Make your contribution necessary. Say no more than you must (given Q).

Between these two principles, which replace Grice's maxims, the communicator has to plan his/her message, which could be truthful or deceptive. This communicative space is not to be intended as the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver governed by discrete state communication systems (that is, sender, receiver, message), but it is to be

intended as a co-regulated communication in which each partner may be influenced by the other, as Fogel [53] sketched out. Along this theoretical line communication is a continuous process not ritualized or over-controlled by either one or the other partner but created by the dynamics of mutual action, so that the results are the *emergent qualities* of the relationship. They are neither foreseeable nor deducible from the previous moves of each partner. Therefore, the information is not 'in' the situation nor 'in' the communicator, but it is created when he/she engages in an active discourse with the partner.

From this point of view we do not see message generation (including the deceptive one) as the result of a planning system in a holistic and functional way. In classical planning systems we have three alternatives: a) a top-down (or "prescriptive") planning system which invests most of the resources in plan construction and involves selection from functionally indexed high-level forms; b) a bottom-up (or "reactive") planning system which pays more attention to execution and selects the concrete linguistic utterance from functionally indexed low-level forms; c) an interleaved (or "limited-commitment") planning system which passes control back and forth between the plan construction and the plan execution. But, as O'Keefe and Lambert [43] pointed out, each of these systems:

"depends on there being a decontextualized relationship between form and function. But, to put it bluntly, decontextualized linguistic forms have no functional significance. It is a truism to say that the meaning of a form depends on the context of its use. At the level of discourse acts or message features, the evidence shows that the form-function relationship is mediated by reasoning from context-specific beliefs" (p. 57).

As a consequence, messages as communicative acts are not planned and executed according to an abstract and universal rule set, but according to the contextual conditions. In fact, "message structure and function are not holistic, but rather reflect the grounding of messages in an ongoing stream of thought and action" [43, p. 59]. This theoretical line has brought a new perspective on message generation, governed by a *local management* [43].

According to DeMit, considering communication situations as organized fields of thoughts and intentions, and messages as the outcome of thought and intention selective expression, message structure arises as the focus moves through the field of thoughts. Focus is an active process of concentrating attention, shared with the partner, on a certain element of reality (event, object, etc.); it involves not only attention to cognitive aspects, but also a perspective on those aspects. Focus is driven by intentions and guided by the route that the communicator formulates to move through the field of thoughts. The resulting message, rather than being a functionally packaged and unified act, is a collation of thought, each of which can have distinctive effects. The diversity of messages in communication situations depends on the fact that the communicators can have different intentions and different routes combined with those intentions, as it is suggested by Anolli (Chapter 1, this volume). This diversity in focusing leads to a diversity in the thoughts selected for expression and differences in the message forms.

This model of situated and context-bound message planning and production can help us in the understanding of deceptive message design. Most low-content deceptive acts may be produced in the flow of communicative exchanges with the partner by the activation of relevant thoughts. They are unforeseen and unprepared, and are the result of the selection of a route suitable to bring the speaker to a "local best" in that situation, or, at least, to an acceptable end state. They may also be parsimonious in communicative terms (enabling the speaker to choose the most convenient and unproblematic message in that situation),

and they may be advantageous in relational terms (allowing the speaker to avoid painful or harmful disclosure and to maintain the relationship).

On the contrary, high-content deceptive acts may request previous planning, since they are generally foreseen and prepared. In this case the deceiver has to elaborate his/her best communicative way to convince the partner. First of all, he/she has to be careful in the deceptive message planning, paying attention to its internal consistency and compatibility with the partner's knowledge, as if it might be true, or, at least, likely. Secondly, he/she has to be as spontaneous as possible in the deceptive message execution in order to be believable.

Therefore, in the high-content deceptive message execution the speaker has to manage as well as possible the interaction with the addressee, monitoring his/her speech and non verbal systems of signaling, but in this task he/she may fail. In fact, in the local management of deceptive utterance production the speaker can either exceed in his/her self-control or show a lack of control. In the first case, in the over-control condition deceivers produce, for instance, an average deeper tone of voice, without variations, whereas in the lack of control condition they have a higher tone associated with many vocal variations. Compared to these naive ("bad") deceivers, the skilled ("good") ones show the same vocal intonation and profile both in truthful and deceptive message production [45]. According to Riggio, Tucker, and Throckmorton [54]. It could be that naive deceivers are people who are characterized by a high self-monitoring level, and are then able to adapt themselves to the interaction process with the partner.

Summing up, in the DeMiT we have to underline three aspects of the cognitive processes implied in deceptive miscommunication. First, deceptive and truthful communication have the same cognitive mechanisms both for planning, production and execution of the messages, consistently with what has been said concerning communication and miscommunication, as Anolli sketched out (Chapter 1, this volume). Second, the cognitive demand for deceptive communication is not a homogeneous and constant factor, but there is an increasing of cognitive request in function of the deception subgroup. For low-content deceptive acts the default cognitive processes seem to be sufficient, since they can be planned, produced and managed in a straightforward manner, almost automatically. In fact, their risk and possible penalty are rather low. Instead, for high-content deceptive acts a notable cognitive effort is needed to package a consistent message and to be credible, possibly in a spontaneous manner. Third, the cognitive demand of deceptive message production is associated with the necessary activity of monitoring and controlling one's own performance. In this activity naive deceivers may exhibit either an excess or a lack of self-control, producing leakage cues (even if minimal), whereas skilled deceivers show an efficient and effective performance maintaining a flexible self-control.

3.5 Deception as communicative interact

Some studies on deception have followed a unidirectional approach to deceptive communication, considering that deceivers convey signals which receivers absorb passively: as Berger and Bradac [55], and Surra and Ridley [56] outlined, deceiver and deceived seem to have little agency when they come to communicate. But, as we have seen in the previous section, deceptive miscommunication, like default (truthful) communication, is not a unidirectional transmission of message from the deceiver to the deceived, but an interactive and interpersonal act by nature. It is a *dynamic and co-*

regulated activity, since the interaction between deceiver and deceived, on the one hand, is a complex system, which is continuously modified by the actions of both the partners as they occur in a given situation. According to Anolli (Chapter 1, this volume). Such an interaction is governed by the communicative synchrony principles. On the other hand, it is a social process by which individuals locally alter their actions according to the ongoing and anticipated actions of the partner.

In deceptive miscommunication, if one hides, it naturally means there is someone to hide from. Hence, the deceptive act, like all communicative acts, is a *relational game* between two individuals: on one side one finds the speaker playing the role of the more or less able deceiver; on the other side the other individual in the role of the victim or detector [45]. In this psychological game there is not one active participant (i.e. the deceiver) and another passive one (i.e. the deceived), given that deceptive miscommunication, like default communication, is not like dancing where one partner leads and the other follows. Deceptive (and truthful) assumptions are not simply created and recovered but rather created between the two in a dynamic manner [24, p. 82].

As a consequence, in deceptive interaction the *success* of the lie depends on the balance between the communicative ability of the deceiver and the acquiescent or shallow attitude of the deceived; alternatively, its *failure* is determined by the reverse (the inability of the deceiver to deceive and the ability of the deceived to detect him/her).

In the relational game of deception a significant position is taken by the addressee. He can assume an acquiescent attitude toward what is said (truthful or deceptive) by the speaker. In this situation the deceptive message is successful; but it is likely to be a matter of low-content deceptive acts. On the contrary, facing high-content deceptive messages the addressee may have a suspicious and unmasking attitude, inquiring and questioning. In this perspective Stiff, Corman, Krizek and Snider [57] have verified that deceivers modified their response latencies in function of the type of questions asked by the interviewer: when the questions were direct and pointed, the deceivers lengthened their response latency more than when the questions were simple, especially in the middle segment of the conversation. This process has been interpreted as an "impulse decay", that is, deceivers take more time to reflect, arrange and monitor their messages in a suitable manner, compatible with the conditions of the contingent contextual interaction.

Likewise, many studies on the *probing effect* have pointed out the significance of the addressee's attitude towards the deceiver's behavior. Probing consists of the direct questioning of a message source regarding the veracity of the information presented, and requesting additional information to be given. According to Buller, Comstock, Aune, and Strzyzewski [58], Buller, Strzyzewski, and Comstock [59], and Stiff and Miller [60]. In general, probing produces an increase of honesty and credibility attribution to the message source (i.e. the potential deceiver), as probed sources are rated more "honest" than non probed sources. The Behavioral Adaptation Explanation (BAE) has been considered as a plausible account of the probing effect. According to BAE, the perception of suspicion by the message source (the deceiver) makes him/her more careful, so that he/she can modify his/her behavior to appear more believable; as a consequence, the addressee becomes more convinced of the source's honesty. In other words, probing causes the addressee to attribute truthfulness to the speaker.

In fact, the perception of suspicion appears to be correlated with four main cues in the probe deceiver's behavior: more speech errors, more speech hesitations, longer response latencies, and more eye contact. But, as Levine and McCornack [61] point out, these behavioral changes in probed deceivers, instead of being evidence for BAE validity, show that they display cues indicative of deceptiveness when the sources are probed. The

subsequent dispute between Buller, Stiff and Burgoon [62] and Levine and McCornack [63] has pointed out that behavioral adaptation is certainly required in deceptive interaction, but that it does not account for the probing effect.

Moreover, when the addressee is suspicious and inquiring, the naive deceiver is likely to increase his/her inadequate emotional responses and to become either "over-emotional" or "over-controlled". In the former case he/she can get nervous, with more blinking, more self- object manipulation, frequent postural shifts and general body activity. In the latter case he/she shows an overall exaggerated control over his/her behavior, with postural rigidity, lack of spontaneity and overdone performance.

The effects of the "deception-detection game" (as a sequence of interactions distributed along a certain time period) can arrive at a *lie-bias* or a *truth-bias*, as it is shown by Levine and McCornack [64], and by McCornack and Parks [65]. In the former the tendency to view one's relational partner as deceptive becomes prevailing in many instances, since he/she is willing to distort the truth without much hesitation. In a few cases, this relational pattern could become aberrant, with frequent explicit actions of deceptiveness. In the latter the partners develop a truthful relationship since in most instances they are telling the truth. In this honest relationship relational involvement, confidence, truth-bias, and accuracy form a causal chain. Obviously, a relationship can change from truth bias, to suspicion, to lie bias rather quickly when a partner has been detected telling lies. Vice versa, the opposite path – from lie-bias to truth-bias – is much more complicated and difficult, because, once an individual has been labeled as a "liar", he/she must prove his/her honesty and believability over and over again before that he/she can be believed, and in certain circumstances he/she is in no state to prove the truth of what he/she says. In this way he/she falls into the *liar paradox*: a liar is not believed, even when he/she tells the truth.

Summing up, according to DeMiT, high-content deceptive miscommunication involves an interactive process in which deceiver and deceived have an apparent co-operative position but, beneath the surface, they have opposite and competing agendas. In this communicative field each partner may use various degrees of freedom to simulate or detect a certain state of affairs. In any case, deceptive interaction, like default communication, is a matter of negotiation between the partners in a recursive manner, because utterances can be interpreted in many ways, and are not always planned in advance, as Anolli sketched out (Chapter 1, this volume). In communicating, the speaker (for instance, the deceiver) does not convey to the addressee what is objective for him/her: it becomes objective only through communication, by changing the state of the speaker's knowledge. In this way he/she can not presume what interpretation the receiver will assign to his/her utterance. Interpretation is product between the partners, and it is not a plain assumption recovery, since in the communicative act interpretation is incremental and context is constructed in a contingent and local manner.

3.6 Modes of deceptive saying

3.6.1 Basic findings

In more than 30 years of study about deception and lying most of the research and the theoretical effort of scholars has been devoted to analyzing communicative processes and performances underlying deceptive messages, even if there is not a global and viable theory on deceptive communication at the present, as we already said in section 1 of this

chapter. However, it is worth noting that great advances in the right direction have been made in this field, in the attempt to understand the distinctiveness of deceptive communication processes and also, more recently, the commonalties with default communication.

McCornack [3], taking his distance from the idea of deceptive communication types as something already preformed, has suggested that individuals manipulate information simultaneously along different dimensions when they deceive others, the result being a potentially indefinite range of specific deceptive message forms. *Information Manipulation Theory* (IMT) is a framework for describing the different ways that information can be manipulated to accomplish deceit [4]. According to this model, the observable variations in deceptive message design reflect a continuum of covert to overt misrepresentation of information, in which relevant information serves as one anchor and explicit falsification of truthful information as the other, as it is shown by Metts [66]. A significant conceptual problem concerns the assumption of the continuum between covert/overt misrepresentation. Verbal deception, by its nature, is covert; linguistic acts that openly misrepresent information are processed and perceived as intentional "flouts" of conversational principles (like sarcasm, parody, pretence and the like) rather than deception [23].

IMT, following Grice's Co-operation principle and the four maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner), views deception as arising from covert violations of one or more of these maxims governing conversational exchanges. According to IMT, individuals, in everyday conversations, monitor the information that they disclose along four different primary dimensions: *amount*, *veracity*, *relevance*, and *clarity*. These dimensions form the platform for inferential processing underlying conversational sense-making. Deceptive messages are "deceptive" in that, although they deviate from the principles of conversational understanding, these departures remain veiled. In particular, research proposed by Ekman [67] and Metts [66] has showed that deception can be fabricated by manipulating the amount of information conveyed, the veracity, the relevance, as well as, according to Bavelas, Black, Chovil, and Mullet [68], McCornack**,** Levine, Solowczuk, Torres, and Campbell [4], and Yeung, Levine, and Nishiyama [69], the clarity of information.

Jacobs, Dawson and Brashers [10, p. 73] claim that IMT conceptualization "does not center on the contribution of the deceiver's message to the hearer's substantive beliefs. Rather, it centers simply on failures to detect [gricean] maxim violations". Moreover, IMT is inconsistent with Grice's theory of conversational maxims, and the idea that messages are deceptive only when they violate the Quality maxim.

On the other side, scholars like Buller and Burgoon [13], Burgoon and Buller [70], Burgoon, Buller, Guerrero, Afifi, and Feldman [6], Burgoon, Buller, Dillman, and Walther [71], Burgoon, Buller, and Guerrero [72], Burgoon, Buller, Floyd, and Grandpre [73], and Burgoon, Buller, White, Afifi, and Aileen-Buslig [74] have developed the *Interpersonal Deception Theory* (IDT), in which a great deal of study has been devoted to the analysis of the communicative patterns of deception. IDT follows a strategic approach to deception comprehension. Buller, Strzyzewski, and Hunsaker [75] say:

"The [deceptive] conversation is characterized by a series of moves and countermoves, and deception's ultimate success or failure is affected by the skill of both communicators to see through the multiple layers of meaning and react in ways which further their goals" (p. 28).

Within this perspective Buller and Burgoon [13] distinguished between *strategic* and *non-strategic communication* in deception. Strategic (or intentional) patterns to deceive are those manipulated by deceivers with the goal of presenting themselves in a truthful and believable manner. Since deceivers know that deception can produce detection cues, they will attempt a strategy to give an honest impression through communicative signals thought to be indicative of veracity. According to IDT, the main strategic communicative patterns in deception are the following: a) *uncertainty* (or vagueness) giving rise to ambiguity by sending intentionally mixed messages through irrelevant information, fewer references to self-experiences, more frequent hand gestures, fewer absolute verbs, etc.; b) *reticence and withdrawal* (or non immediacy) signals used in creating a distance from the partner, or withdrawing oneself from direct interaction by means of shorter responses, verbal non immediacy, longer response latencies, less mutual gaze, less forward lean, greater proxemic distance, etc.; c) *disassociation* signals used to divert responsibility for a previous message or an attempt to remove oneself from the deceptive act by means of fewer self-references, fewer self-interest statements, more other references, verbal non immediacy, etc.; d) *image and relationship protection* signals designed to present oneself in a favorable light by nodding, smiling, refraining from interruption, etc. and thus hoping to avoid deception scrutiny

The non-strategic communication in deception is formed by unintentional *leakage cues*, and deceivers are unaware that they are revealing deception, or are unable to control them in preventing deception detection. According IDT, there are three categories of unintentional non-strategic leakage cues: a) *revealing arousal and nervousness* with more blinking, a higher pitch of voice, vocal nervousness, more speech errors, longer response latencies, less gesturing, more leg and foot movements; b) *revealing negative affect* by means of less pleasant facial expressions, more frequent negative feedback, reduced eye contact, less pleasant vocal profile, and more negative statements; c) *incompetent communication performance* with more speech errors, hesitation, word repetitions, rigidity, brief utterances, channel discrepancies, dissynchrony, exaggerated performance, and lack of spontaneous behavior.

Therefore, IDT sees the deceiver's communication as a balance between intentional and unintentional (involuntary) signals: if the former prevails, the deception succeeds, whereas, if the latter takes priority, failure is likely. As a consequence, IDT seems to conceive the deceptive exchange as a battle field, in which the deceiver aims to make strategic communicative signals in an intentional and consistent way to convince the addressee, who, however, aims to detect the deceiver by scrutinizing his/her behavior and communicative style.

3.6.2 Linguistic styles of deceptive miscommunication

According to van Dijk [76]**,** we can define *linguistic style* as an articulated dynamic pattern of micro- and macro-components of language, intentionally adopted by the speaker to produce specific context effects on his/her addressee, as it is proposed by Sperber and Wilson [77]. In deceptive conversation, like in default conversation, the connection between text and context encourages the production of specific linguistic styles during the flow of exchanges. These styles are to be thought of as a kaleidoscopic processes, calibrated in relation to the necessities of the speaker-addressee system, as Sandig and Selting [78] sketched out. By combining different linguistic elements, it is possible to represent a consistent and systematic textual production, diachronically organized with regard to the dynamics of communicative exchanges. The diachronic character of stylistic

profiles is caused by the need to introduce opportune changes in the linguistic plan during interaction, adapting one's own message to the context variations, moving the narrative focus as the occasion demands. The diachronic model of the verbal style, proposed by Sinclair [79], foresees continuous narrative changes, called "postural changes", which include the ongoing definition of the conversational positions and the relational boundaries between the partners in order to adapt the local intent to a contingent communicative exchange. In this stream of conversational sequences the dynamic of postural changes involves the selection of verbal styles, defined both by textual and trans-textual (contextual) properties.

Within this perspective, DeMiT assumes that in deceptive miscommunication deceivers may resort to a considerable variety of linguistic styles, which may be very different one from another and, in certain circumstances, also contrastive. In particular, according to Anolli and Balconi [80], three main linguistic styles can be recognized in deceptive conversation, as shown in figure 3.2. First, deceivers can have a linguistic style characterized by *ambiguousness* and *prolixity*, especially when facing an acquiescent and silent addressee. Within this linguistic profile they use many modifiers in the semantic value of words (with a prevalence of dubitative forms), a high number of "levelers" terms (like "all", "nobody", etc.), complex and long utterances, a scant number of factual utterances, high variation in the choice of voice, a wide use of irrelevant information. In particular, in telling lies, deceivers refer less contextual and sensory information in favor of subjective experience, as well as accounts of imagined memories (equivalent to the deception condition) which differ from accounts based on perceived memories (equivalent to the truth condition), as it is suggested by Alonso-Quecuty [81]. Aspects of this vague, noncommittal and unverifiable linguistic style have also been found in many previous studies, as in Buller and Burgoon [5], Carpenter [82], Dulaney [83], Knapp, Hart, and Dennis [84], Kuiken [85], Miller & Stiff [86], and Todd-Mancillas and Kibler [87].

By means of this speech style deceivers try to "dilute" the falsehood and make it less identifiable. They use semantically rich and syntactically well-constructed utterances, which, at the same time, are neither clear nor relevant. In this way they appear to "neutralize" and "narcotize" the falsehood, without disconcerting the addressee. It is a matter of "gray shades", as Baumeister [88] says. In everyday life, no event can be described simply as being true or false, black or white; rather, it has to be represented by different gradations of gray, nearer or farther from one of these two extremes. With ambiguousness and vagueness deceivers are able to lie without running the risk of exposing themselves excessively and of being openly believed wrong if they should be detected, as Buller and Burgoon [5], and McCornack, Levine, Morrison, and Lapinski [89] sketched out.

This line of representing reality, however, is very common, because ubiquitous cultural artifacts take on a regular mediation function between the subject and the environment. In particular, secondary (or symbolic) artifacts provide people with cognitive devices by means of which they can adapt and arrange a sequence of events, as it is outlined by Cole [90]. According to Geertz [91, p. 5]**,** in this perspective the human being may be thought of as "an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun".

Second, deceivers may resort to a linguistic style that is characterized by *concise assertiveness* and *elliptic avoidment*, especially when the addressee appears suspicious and inquiring. Within this linguistic style they adopt a reticent attitude, preferring to say the bare minimum; the messages are frequently short, without a subject and with an implicit predicate; the utterances are brief, with a reduced number of words, many long pauses, as well as long response latencies.

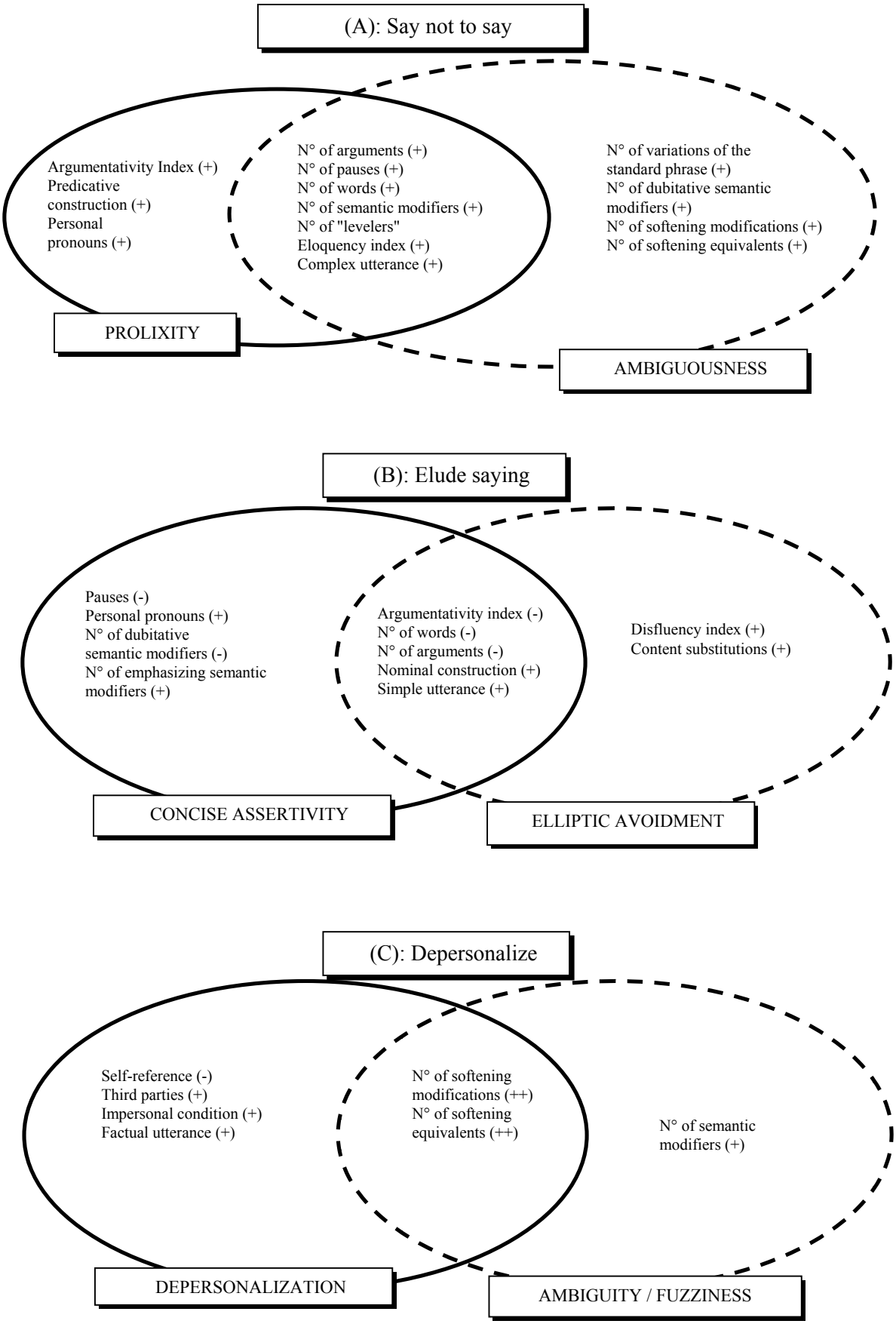

Figure 3.2. The main linguistic styles in deceptive miscommunication

Elements of this concise, reticent and elusive speech style have also been found in previous studies, as in Knapp and Comadena [92], Kuiken [85], Stiff, Corman, Krizek, and Snider [57], Stiff and Miller [60], Todd-Mancillas and Kibler [87], and Vrij [93].

By means of the reduction of information and the great simplification of speech, deceivers choose to shirk saying, since they can decide not to tell their own lie and to define its boundaries as little as possible. In this way their assertiveness can appear as a linguistic device intended to a guarantee the truthfulness of the contents and corroborate the reliability of their speech.

Third, deceivers can resort to a linguistic style that is characterized by *depersonalization*. Their speech includes a small number of self-references, frequent recourse to third parties, frequent factual utterances, great use of impersonal conditions (the impersonal "one" and the plural "we"). This linguistic phenomenon was also found in previous research [13, 67, 66]. By using the depersonalization style deceivers aim to avoid taking responsibility for their own statements and to dissociate themselves from their messages, shifting the focus to aspects of the external context.

The variety of speech styles suitable for deceptive miscommunication allows the speaker to adopt and to follow the most effective linguistic route in view of the addressee's attitude, likewise the speech styles in default communication. It worth noting that deceivers use words to "transform" reality, so as to make the falsehood appear reliable and believable. Deception asks for a continuous and local check of the effectiveness of message design: one who deceives has to be sensitive to the interlocutor's changes of attitude. It is a question of tuning not only to avoid loss of reliability, but also to appear honest and trusty.

3.7 Machiavellian attitude and self-deception as devices for a skilled deceptive miscommunication

In this section we will tackle the question of some psychological features involved in a *skilled deceptive miscommunication*. Until now the routes of study followed in this field have been mainly two: the *structural route* concerning the personality of the skilled deceiver (so called "Machiavellian personality" or Machiavellianism), and the *functional route* regarding the self-deception mechanism as a condition to tell the falsehood.

3.7.1 The Machiavellian personality construct and deceptive miscommunication

Riggio and Friedman [94], Riggio, Tucker, and Throckmorton [54], and Zuckerman, DePaulo, and Rosenthal [95] have considered that extroverted and dominant people are generally more successful than introverted at controlling leakage cues. In particular, individuals with high self-monitoring ability and less anxiety are more able to increase facial animation and head movements, verbal fluency, eye contact and use of personal pronouns. These people are good actors, appearing as skilled communicators, untroubled by scrutiny.

As a consequence, some people may look more "honest" or "dishonest" both in their behavior and their physical features, regardless if they are telling the truth or a lie. This *"demeanor bias"* shows how low the competence of human beings is in deception detection and how much depends on unreliable factors, as it is shown by Ekman [9], Frank and Ekman [96], and Hess and Kleck [97], even though professionals with special interest or skill in deception detection (like officers, judges, clinical psychologists, etc.) are fairly accurate in judging people who are lying or telling the truth about their opinions, as

Ekman, O'Sullivan, and Frank [98] sketched out.

The "Machiavellian personality" construct finds its justification in this theoretical platform. It can be described as an attitude used to manipulate and exploit others, with an adaptive function. In fact, according to Wilson, Near, and Miller [99] Machiavellian behavior can be regarded as a "defect" strategy, which possesses advantages (i.e. gains from exploiting others), as well as disadvantages (i.e. retaliation and avoidance by others). The Machiavellian worldview is essentially defined by three features: a) it involves using manipulative strategies such as deceit and flattery in interpersonal relations; b) it implies a cynical perception of others as weak and untrustworthy; c) it includes a basic indifference toward conventional rules of morality in thought and action, as it is suggested by Fehr, Samson, and Paulhus [100].

According to this construct, Ashton, Lee, and Son [101] proposed that high Mach individuals would be more skilled in deceptive miscommunication, by increasing eye contact and fabricating plausible verbal lies. Moreover, Machiavellian people are characterized by a cool detachment, which makes them less emotionally involved with others and less worried about saving face in embarrassing situations.

High Mach, more than low Mach individuals, believe that others are under their influence, and are ready to plot and proceed to the manipulation of these people. According to Shepperd and Socherman [102], they customarily act in a domineering style and prefer a show of strength in front of others, avoiding the use of weakness tactics like sandbagging (a manipulative strategy in which people feign incompetence and display low ability to induce an opponent to reduce effort or lower his/her guard).

Summing up, the structural route sees competent deceptive miscommunication as the outcome of a personality profile. Machiavellian people resort to deception in a skilful manner as a means, among many others, to obtain their goal of power and dominance, since, as Machiavelli said, "the end justifies the means".

3.7.2 What better deceiver than a sincere deceiver?

In the analysis of skilled deceptive miscommunication, instead of following a structural route which considers deception ability as a personality trait, it is possible to proceed to a functional one and see *self-deception* as a means to tell other-deception in a believable manner. If non- true becomes true for myself, why should it not become true for others? Self-deception especially concerns complex situations such as interpersonal games, affective experiences, social competitive connivance, relational negotiation, and so on. It is not an easy matter, because self-deception has been and is a field of contrasting perspectives.

How indeed can falsehood become true for oneself? If one follows the classical definition of deception (A deceives B using *p* utterance if (i) A knows that *p* is false and *non-p* is true, (ii) A induces B to believe that *p*), then self-deception is submitted to a double paradox: a) static paradox, given that an agent deceives him/herself only if he/she believes that *p* and that *non-p* at the same time; b) dynamic paradox, given that the self-deceiver must have the intent to fabricate a false belief in him-/herself who is aware of the truth.

To overcome these paradoxes, different explicative models have been proposed. First, according to the standard model, Davidson [103] has proposed a self-deception view grounded on human rationality, in particular on the rational choice theory. Ideally, individuals would optimize the choice which assures the highest degree of expected utility; but really they follow a "bounded rationality" which barely satisfies the expected utility.

Therefore, self-deception results from the *weakness of the warrant*, since the self-deceiver, among the reasons used to formulate a judgment, does not consider the best possible reasons but the most functional ones for his/her aims and desires. It is a matter of practical reasoning, in which he/she prefers in some way (conscious or unconscious) to avoid an unpleasant condition (misleading information, like that *p*), rather than accept correct knowledge (that *non-p*). To reach this aim, the self-deceiver has to remove attention from the reasons contrasting the falsehood, consider only the useful alternatives, and resort to a particular biased system to process information and transform his/her beliefs. According to the words of Kunda [104], the motivation can influence "the generation and evaluation of hypotheses, of inference rules, and of evidence", and "motivationally biased memory search will result in the formation of additional biased beliefs and theories that are constructed so as to justify desired conclusions" (p. 483).

Second, to overcome self-deception paradoxes other scholars have proposed a *mental partition* model, according to which, given the distinction between "primary" consciousness (i.e., the immediate, plain and almost automatic knowing activity) and "secondary" one (i.e., the metaknowledge as knowing to know), self-deception is due to an automatic "unconscious" process, since the self-deceived is not conscious of professing one of the two belief *p* or belief *not-p* for motivational reasons, as it is suggested by Gur and Sackeim [105]. Also Davidson [106] has recently claimed that "obviously two beliefs could coexist only if they were somehow kept separate" (p. 8). In particular, the threatening belief assumes a central position in the consciousness of the self-deceiver, while the deceptive belief takes an avowed position in his/her consciousness, as Gozzano [107] proposed. A stronger mental partition model has been advanced by the modular perspective of Pears [108] and Heil [109], according to which the mind is divided into different sub-systems. In this way the self-deception sub-system not only possesses its own "rationality" but also can follow different beliefs with reference to the main system (figure 3.3).

Third, Mele [110, 111, 112] has devised a "deflationary" model of self-deception, which is conceived as the avoidment or re-interpretation of a belief perceived as "threatening" by the individual. First of all, Mele proposed to overcome the static paradox. The self-deceived, driven by the desire that *p*, may believe that *p*, without needing a previous belief of that *non-p*. This process is based on cognitive biases typically linked with "cold" cognition, like vividness of information, confirmation bias, availability heuristics, tendency to search for causal explanations, etc. In particular, negative and positive misinterpretation, selective focusing/attending and selective evidence-gathering are the main four ways by which a person's desiring that *p* can contribute to his/her believing that *p*.

In addition, Mele intended to tackle the dynamic paradox. To overcome it, he stated that, crudely put, self-deception is not an intentional subjective activity; rather, it is a motivationally biased information processing. According to Trope and Lieberman [113], in his "anti-agency view" Mele made reference to the *confidence threshold* in order to accept (or reject) a hypothesis in natural reasoning. For each hypothesis this threshold is defined by two values: a) an acceptation threshold (that is, the lowest level of "trust" in the truth which is necessary in order to accept that truth), and b) a reject one (that is, the lowest degree of trust in the hypothesis falsehood which is necessary in order to reject it).

The acceptation value threshold depends on the ratio between the acceptation costs of a false hypothesis and the information costs. The former consists in the subjective significance of avoiding a wrong belief of that *p* (the false hypothesis); the latter concern the cognitive resources and effort of information processing relevant to the hypothesis.

The reject value threshold depends on the ratio between the reject costs of a true hypothesis and the information costs. So the individual's desires may orientate the verifying or falsifying process of a hypothesis in two steps: a) they guide the choice of the hypothesis to be verified; b) they appraise the hypothesis according to the confidence thresholds in order to avoid the mistake costs (i.e. the subjective importance of wrongly avoiding belief of that *p*). The higher the costs of the mistake, the higher the acceptation value threshold and the lower the reject value threshold. Castelfranchi [114] has stressed this anti-intentional point of view and has proposed a *goal-oriented model* of self-deception. Self-deception seems to be not a "goal-governed" behavior (i.e. intentional and subjectively finalized), but a "goal-oriented" one, since it is a way of behavior finalized to reach a goal without an anticipatory representation of the goal itself by the agent. In this sense self-deception is an unconscious defensive mechanism like animal mimicry; in order to avoid psychological disease, the self-deceiver applies a cognitive operation on negative beliefs, such as to make them false or incomplete. In this way he/she acts "as if" he/she were governed by that goal.

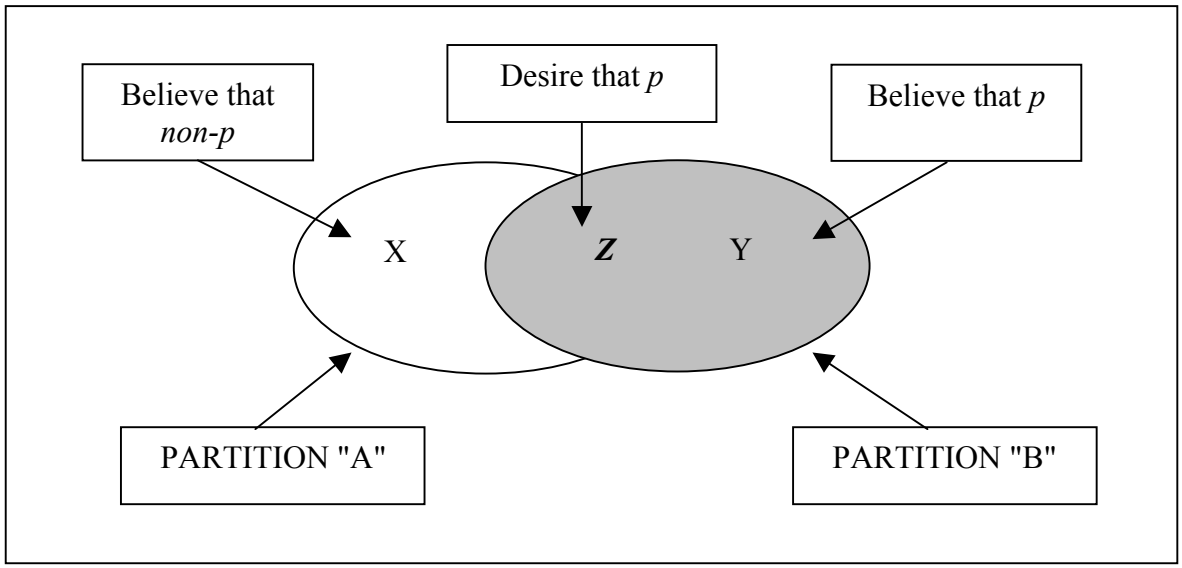

Figure 3.3. The model of mental partition according to the modular perspective. Adapted from Heil [109]

Self-deception calls for an incertitude condition, so that individuals can behave *as if* they could believe they may influence something that is already determined and not modifiable, by means of a sort of "almost magic thought or action", as Shafir and Tversky [115] say. Given the complexity of the situation, they may be self-persuaded because of a shift in their belief system: some undesired hypothesis can be weakened in favor of alternative beliefs that are more compatible with their desires, more convenient and, finally, more "true". Certainly, we can assume that nobody has the intentional aim of deceiving him-/herself, and that nobody is able to believe something just because he/she wants to, and so decides that it is indeed true. Two conditions seem to be essential: a) the plausibility of the belief of that *p* (in fact, if *p* is plausible – i.e. it respects the "reason constraints" – we have plenty of space in which to manoeuvre with the motivationally biased reasoning); b) the threatening value of belief to be inhibited or to be re-interpreted.

In fact, Feingold [116] found a positive correlation between self-deception and self-esteem. Although these two psychological constructs are completely distinct, they both account for subjective looks-personality aspects, and represent a similar self-orientation: to

have a positive subjective view of self. These are basic aspects of the construction of self-perceived attractiveness and social desirability, which allow the individual to occupy a satisfying position in his/her own social world. In this sense self-deception is not considered as a failure of human rationality; rather, it seems to be and to work as a "defense mechanism" to reduce the psychic disease generated by a threat against the aims and self-image of individuals.

The self-deceiver, like the illusionist, is able to "transform" reality in his/her own mind, and a false belief becomes true in his/her mind. As a consequence, self-deception could be an effective way to fabricate other-deception. In fact, the self-deceiver has to do only with the truth, and he/she is "sincere" in believing what he/she believes, even if it is the outcome of a disbelief. In this way a self-deceiver is "sincere" when he/she tells a lie to others, because he/she tells them what he/she believes. Therefore, what better deceiver than a sincere deceiver? Otherwise said, the self-deceiver is the best other-deceiver.

3.8 Conclusions

Deception seen as a family of subjective and interactive processes which take place in our everyday life in different contexts of use, need a global model to explain the range of phenomena included in this family. The miscommunication perspective, as outlined in the MaCHT proposed by Anolli (Chapter 1, this volume) has seemed to us an interesting and promising route to follow in order to illustrate and understand the different shades of deceptive interaction. In fact, deception may be interpreted essentially as a communicative act aimed at improving environment resources, protecting self-image and self-esteem, respecting social standards of relational interaction, as well as avoiding rudeness and discourtesy. In this field high- and low-content deceptive act may be an useful device.

Generally speaking, in our theoretical perspective, we have not followed a *cartesian paradigm*, based on the dichotomous distinction between mind and body, that is, between "pure" rationality and "impulsive" or "perverse" irrationality. Truth-tellers would belong to the first sphere; false-tellers would belong to the second one. Rather, in the DeMiT perspective we have been inspired by a *baconian paradigm*, according to which mistakes and other wrong things such as lies and deceptive acts pertain to human nature in its information and processing and in its knowledge activity. We assume that we can not tell truth and falsehood apart as if they were black or white boxes. The ambiguousness and disease aspects of deception can not be thought of simply as an intentional decision to protect oneself or damage others, nor as a Machiavellian personality effect, nor yet as a rationality paradox and an interference of emotionally and motivationally biased reasoning. Instead, this ambiguousness can be thought of as a global aspect of operating and interacting with other people, because in this way our mind organizes the network of social experience according to our cultural environment. In this sense, in an everyday relational situation, we can consider deception as a route to express the communicator's sensations, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and desires; likewise, at communication level, it may be useful to have the chance of hiding, omitting, concealing or, simply, blurring information.

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3.10 References

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