Communication in Context: Shared Understanding in a Complex World

Collaborative Research Project CCCOM, Eurocores Scheme, Eurounderstanding

Individual Projects

- **IP 1.** Åsa Wikforss, Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, Stockholm University

- **IP 2.** Daniel Cohnitz, Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, University of Tartu

- **IP 3.** Jussi Haukioja, Professor of Philosophy, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

- **IP 4**. Teresa Marques, Investigador Ciência (senior researcher), Centro de Filosofia, University of Lisbon

- **IP 5.** Robert van Rooij, senior staff, Institute for Logic, Language, and Computation (ILLC), University of Amsterdam

Associated Projects

- **AP 1.** Peter Bosch, Professor of Computational Linguistics and Cognitive Science, Institute of Cognitive Science, University of Osnabrück

- **AP 2.** James Hampton, Professor of Psychology, City University London

- **AP 3.** Gerhard Jaeger, Professor of General Linguistics in Tuebingen

Overall objective

- To develop a new theory of communicative success.
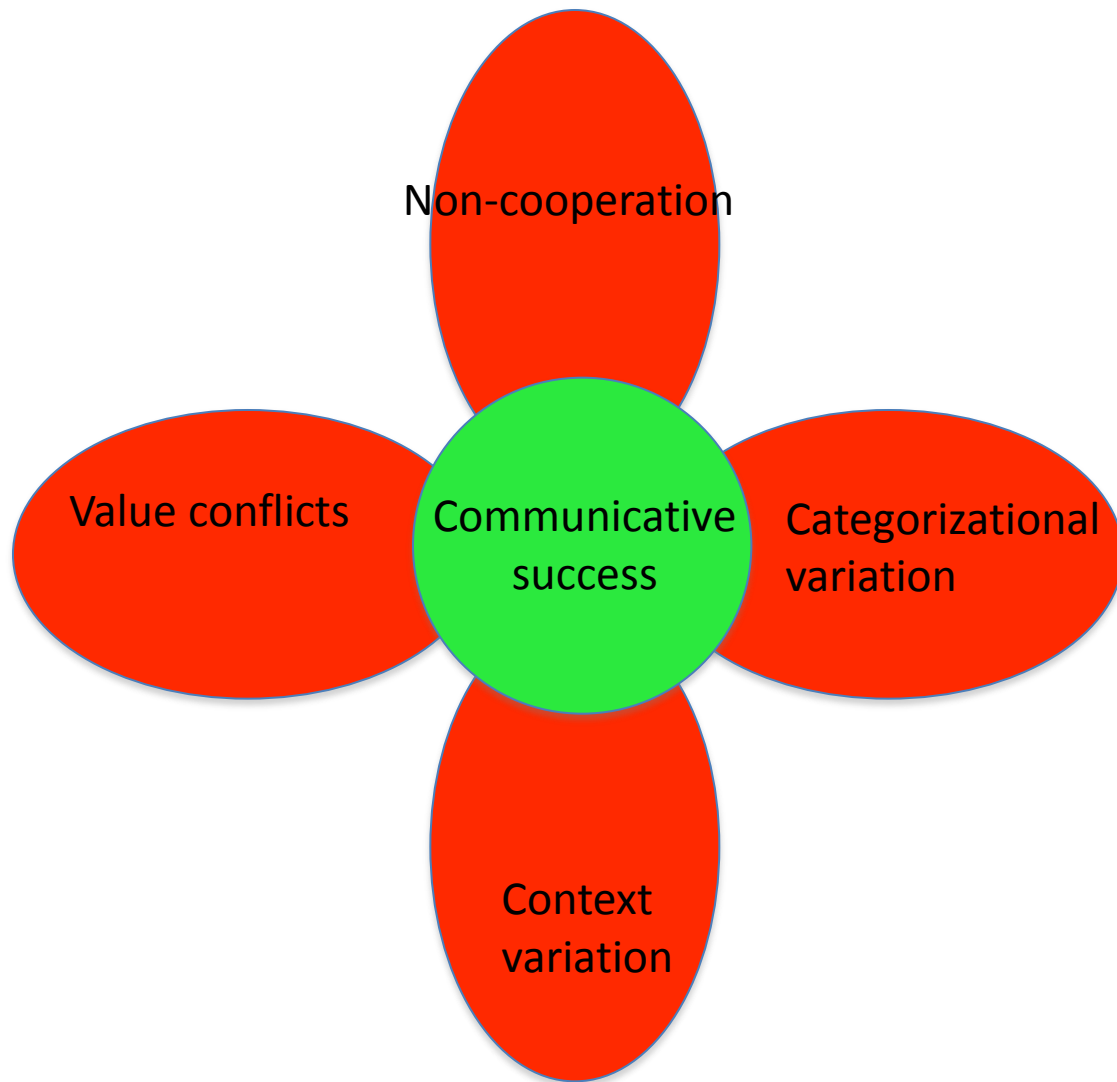
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– Semantic content

– Full pragmatic information

Main question

- How is communicative success possible despite the obstacles posed by the cultural and contextual differences that form the backdrop of human interaction?

Non-cooperation

Value conflicts

Communicative success

Categorizational variation

Context variation

Main hypothesis

- Successful communication requires sufficient *overlap* in the message communicated (instead of identity).

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- This developed by all of the disciplines involved in the CRP: semantics, pragmatics, game theory, value theory, cognitive science, socio-linguistics, experimental philosophy and psychology.

IP 1: Communication in Context
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- Communication relation?

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- Problem: A great variation in conceptions.
- Apparent dilemma: Communication fails or identity of concepts despite great variation in conceptions.
- Alternative: Similarity of content sufficient.

IP 2: Verbal disputes and the reference of singular terms (Cohnitz)

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(i)Develop an account of 'merely verbal' disagreements. Analyze philosophical disputes.

(ii)Investigate the role of background information in the interpretation of singular terms. Eye tracking experiments (AP 1, Bosch).

IP 3: Words in Worlds (Haukioja)

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- Two main aims:

(i) How do differences in categorisation dispositions cause communication failure? Experimental work on differences in categorisation dispositions (AP 2, Hampton).

(ii) How does context affect the appropriateness of speech acts? Experimental work: Which norms do speakers take to apply in various contexts? (Borge)

IP 4: Contextualism, Relativism and Practical Disagreement (Marques)

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- Contemporary relativism: Truth relativized to *perspectives* (moral, aesthetic, etc.).

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- Hypothesis: No form of relativism can account for such disputes insofar as the focus remains on the context-dependence of semantic values (content or truth).

- Need to introduce further notion of disagreement: *practical disagreement.* Coordination in conduct. (IP 5)

IP 5: Communication and the possibility of deceit (van Rooij)

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- Starting point: View communication as a kind of game between speaker and hearer.

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- Main problem: How can linguistic conventions and conversational norms remain stable under the pressure of non-cooperative behavior?

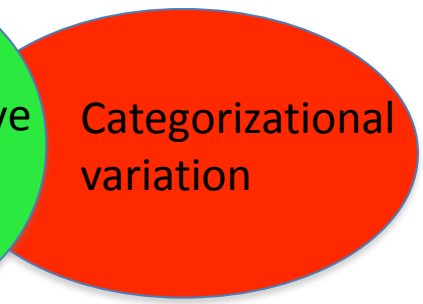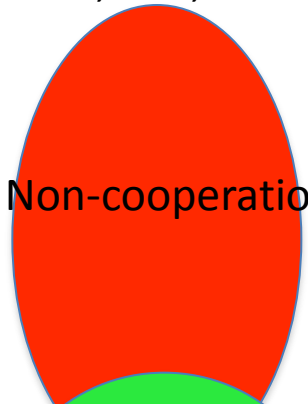# IP 5: Communication and the possibility of deceit (van Rooij)

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- Proposal: Analyze communication and deceit using evolutionary game theory, EGT (AP 3, Jaeger).
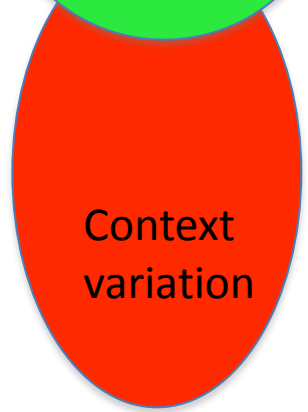
IP 4, IP 5, AP 3

Non-cooperation

IP 2, IP 4, IP 5

Value conflicts

Communicative success CRP

Categorizational variation

IP 1, IP 2, IP 3, AP 1, AP 2

Context variation

IP 1, IP 3, IP 4, IP 5