

**“WHAT STEERS THE INTERPRETATION OF A VISUAL
OR MULTIMODAL MESSAGE? A RELEVANCE THEORY
PERSPECTIVE” (BASED ON FORCEVILLE 2020)**

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Multimodality and semiotics scholarship is in need of an inclusive model of communication that takes into account the identities of the communicator, the audience, as well as their relation, and that does not privilege specific media and/or modes over others. The contours of such a model exist in relevance theory/RT (Sperber and Wilson 1995), whose central claim is that *each act of communication comes with the presumption of optimal relevance to the envisaged audience*. Hitherto RT scholars (typically: linguists) have almost exclusively analysed face-to-face exchanges. To fulfil RT’s potential to develop into an inclusive theory of communication, it is necessary to explore how it can be adapted and refined to account for (1) messages in other modes than (only) the verbal mode; and (2) mass-communication. In Forceville (2020) I propose how RT works for mass-communicative messages that involve static visuals. In my presentation I will specifically focus on how RT approaches the key issue of which factors have an impact on the interpretation of a picture or a multimodal message, discussing this issue by drawing on examples from different genres (logos & pictograms, advertisements, and cartoons).

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CAPTURING MEANINGFUL GENERALIZATIONS AT VARYING LEVELS OF RESOLUTION: THE CASE OF THE FAMILY OF “*SER + MUY DE-PP*” CONSTRUCTIONS IN SPANISH

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On the basis of 1,710 examples of Spanish *es muy de* (‘is very of’) from the Corpus del Español NOW, together with acceptability judgements from 10 native speakers of Castilian and South American Spanish, this paper provides a principled constructionist account (cf. Goldberg, 2006; Goldberg and Herbst, 2021) of the main characteristics of expressions like (1)-(4) below, with special focus on the acceptability differences of the nominal slot in the PP.

- (1) *Él es muy de bares/del siglo XXI/de un equipo como la Juventus*
Lit. ‘He is very of bars, /of the century XVI/of a team like the Juventus.’
‘He is very into bars/very XXI century/a big supporter of a team like the Juventus.’
- (2) *Él es muy de levantarse muy temprano*
Lit. ‘He is very of get.up.himself very early.’
‘He is very into getting up early.’
- (3) *Mi marido es muy de que yo haga lo que me propongan*
Lit. ‘My husband is very of that I should.do the which me propose.’
‘My husband is very in favour of me doing whatever I’m asked to do.’
- (4) (a) *Tu ayuda es muy de agradecer*
Lit. ‘Your help is very of thank.’
‘Your help is very appreciated.’
(b) *Él es muy de fiar*
Lit. ‘He is very of trust.’
‘He is very trustworthy.’

Examples (1)-(4) are best handled in terms of coercion between an intensifier (*muy* ‘very’) and non-stative/non-gradable elements, such as (i) bare nouns, definite and indefinite NPs (cf. (1)), (ii) active infinitival clauses (cf. (2)), (iii) finite *que*- (‘that’)-clauses (cf. (3)), and passive infinitival clauses (cf. (4)). These combinations qualify as stativizing constructions (Michaelis 2011) and, more specifically, as individual-level predicates (i.e. stative predicates denoting an essential, time-stable property) with a characterizing, evaluative interpretation (Fernández-Leborans and Sánchez López, 2015: 112). This explains why *ser* (‘be’) cannot alternate with *estar* (‘be.at’) in constructions of this kind (cf. (5)), and why PPs resisting a gradable, evaluative construal are infelicitous (cf. (6)(a)-(b)).

- (5) *Él está muy #de bares/#de levantarse temprano*
Lit. ‘He is.at very of bars/very of get.up early.’
- (6) (a) *La temperatura es de 30 grados*
‘The temperature is of 30 degrees.’

(b) #*La temperatura es muy de 30 grados*

Lit. ‘The temperature is very of 30 degrees.’

The specific constructional interpretations in (1)-(4) arise from contextual adjustments (Carston, 2015), including variables like (i) the (non-)human nature of the main clause subject, (ii) to extent to which the state of affairs is controllable by the main clause subject, and (iii) the actual or potential iterativity of the state of affairs. Thus, the coerced PPs may be contextually modulated as encoding a person’s habits (cf. (1)-(2) or inclinations (cf. (3)), a potential modal deontic habituality (cf. (4)(a)), and/or an evaluative property of a person, entity or event (cf. (4)(b)).

In sum, the semantico-pragmatic hallmarks of the sub-constructions in (1)-(4) can be subsumed under a family of *ser muy de*-PP constructions, with this general meaning: ‘**X** (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) (**SUBJECT**) IS SUBJECTIVELY CONSTRUED AS HAVING **Y** (A HIGHLIGHTED CLASSIFICATORY PROPERTY (OF AN INDIVIDUAL/CLASS) (**ATTRIBUTE**))’.

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AUTOMATIC GENERATION OF COUNTER-NARRATIVES TO COMBAT HATE SPEECH USING LANGUAGE MODELS

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Hate speech has become a global concern, particularly affecting vulnerable people and communities across multiple online platforms. In this talk, we will explore an innovative strategy to tackle this problem, in the framework of the European project RealUP: Combating Hate Speech. Using advanced language models, such as GPT-4 or Mistral, we will demonstrate how it is possible to generate effective counter-narratives that can mitigate the impact of hate speech in real time. The presentation will start with an introduction to the problem, showing the different approaches that have been implemented over time and highlighting how the integration of large language models has rapidly evolved to address this specific challenge. Examples of these approaches will be presented, analysing both their strengths and the challenges encountered. In addition, future work and possible lines of continuation in this research will be discussed, with the aim of improving and extending the effectiveness of automatic counter-narratives.

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Abstracts

ANALYSING USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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In the age of digital social networks, their users have become effective providers of instant and authentic information through the content they post online. The detection and analysis of this user-generated content (UGC) can be extremely useful when such messages deal with issues that affect our society. Its analysis can enable the relevant institutions to take the appropriate actions to tackle specific social problems. In this line, a salient problem that affects physical safety in our society today is gender-based violence and, in particular, acts of violence where women are the victims.

In this context, the present research analyses a corpus of text messages about violence against women from the social media platform Twitter/X. This corpus is integrated within the multimodal intelligent system ALLEGRO, which has been developed for the analysis of social media data and aims to detect problems and adverse events in real time. ALLEGRO consists of different modules for text, image, and sound processing. In this paper, the focus will be on the first of these modules, named DIAPASON, since the corpus under study is a compilation of written UGC units that deal with the social problem of violence against women.

This paper shows the results of the textual analysis of this corpus using the TEXMILAB programme. It is designed as a linguistic laboratory and includes tools for corpus building, text preprocessing, and text analysis. The results show the analysis of unigrams, bigrams, collocations, and concordances, with the aim of identifying the key words and structures that social media users employ in relation to the problem of violence against women, in order to shed light on this social problem and the concepts associated with it. Overall, the analysis presents how the social problem of violence against women is discursively produced and reproduced by ordinary citizens as social media users who generate media content and can have a notable and practical social impact contributing to the understanding of this social problem and how it is perceived and represented in our society.

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