

Inference in Second Language Oral Communication

Montpellier, France

12-13 May, 2016

"Speaking is half his who speaks, and half his who hears [...]"¹

(Montaigne, *Essays* 3, Chapter XIII)

According to Bailly (1998: 132)², inference "is a logical, abstract operation through which one elaborates a conclusion, based on a fact or a proposition..."

In the context of oral communication, inference is part of the construction of the interaction; it relies on numerous signs to be found at different levels. Indeed inferential processes lead to the construction of information from a context, even though the information is not directly and explicitly given.

Inferential processes may apply to parts of the language that is spoken, to the attitudes, the behaviour, the thoughts, the feelings, the expectations, the intentions and even the culture of the co-speaker.

All situations of communication imply inferences, but some of them specifically favour this kind of mental processing: negotiation, argumentation, intercultural exchanges, and communication in a second language...

More precisely, in the case of foreign languages, "inference can help reconstruct a message, a passage or a word from the context and from what is known of the situation, or to compensate for the lack of comprehension of a message, a passage or a word", according to C. Poussard (2000: 203)³. Any learner of a foreign language sets up inferential processes in situations of comprehension and production, sometimes going as far as resorting to emotional inferences within the larger framework of oral interaction. By contrast with L1, these processings may be amplified in L2 due to difficulties in understanding the speech of the native speaker, the words spoken or the cultural differences...

The purpose of the forthcoming interdisciplinary symposium is to look into the specificity of oral communication in L2, whatever the language. This conference will gather researchers from different fields (linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, didactics) who will address the topic of inference in L2 oral communication. Papers based on oral or multimodal corpora with an empirical approach (case studies) are encouraged.

The objective is to try and provide answers to the following questions:

- in which way do inferences produced in L2 differ from those made in L1?
- how do L2 speakers interpret the information provided by the behaviour, the attitude, the expectations, the intentions and even the cultural background of the co-speaker?
- does lack of understanding generate maladjusted and even false inferences and what are the consequences of such incomprehension?
- which linguistic devices (such as hesitations, repetitions, signs of incomprehension) or non-linguistic devices (such as gestures, facial expressions) does the learner of L2 have recourse to and in which context will (s)he do so?
- are the linguistic and/or speech markers of inference similar or different in the mother tongue and in the learner's L2? What are the consequences in the learner's performance in L2? Which speech strategies will (s)he set up?
- what kind of didactic options could be envisaged with a view to help learners in their use of inference in L2?

Keywords: inference, oral corpora, didactics/language teaching, second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, linguistic resources, gestures.

¹ Montaigne, M. (1877). *The Essays of Montaigne*. Translated by Charles Cotton, Edited by William Carew Hazlitt. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm#link2HCH0106>

² Bailly, D. (1998). *Les mots de la didactique des langues. Le cas de l'anglais. Lexique*. Paris-Gap : Ophrys.

³ Poussard, C. (2000). *Compréhension de l'anglais oral et technologies éducatives*. Thèse de doctorat, université Paris 7, 390 p.

Conference Organization:

Oral presentations will be allocated twenty minutes plus ten minutes for questions and discussion.

At the end of each day, thematic workshops with all the speakers will be held.

Presentations can be given either in French or English but French will be the language mostly used, especially in workshops.

Keynote speaker:

Véronique TRAVERSO, ICAR, UMR 5191, Senior Researcher (CNRS), université de Lyon 2

Call for Papers:

Abstract submissions should be sent before the **October 1, 2015** at: colloque.icol2@gmail.com

They should include: the title of the paper, the name(s), first name(s), home university and email address of the author(s), then the abstract (in French or in English) – which should not exceed 500 words, and finally 5 references. The abstract will provide details on the topic, the corpus or the data used, the methodology and the main results obtained.

Submissions will be evaluated anonymously by two members of the scientific committee.

If you have any questions on the organization of the conference or on scientific matters, please contact the organizers at: colloque.icol2@gmail.com

Key dates and Venue:

1 October 2015: Abstract submission deadline

15 December 2015: Notification of acceptance and program of the conference

15 January 2016: Registration starts.

Registration fees: 40€

This includes Friday lunch and coffee breaks.

The conference will be held at the University Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, Saint-Charles (Tram stop: Albert 1^{er}) on **12 - 13 May 2016**.

Publication of papers:

The organizers envisage the publication of a selection of papers in the journal *Les Cahiers de Praxématique* as a special issue.

Conference organizers:

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Scientific Committee:

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