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How evaluations construct identities: the psycholinguistic model of evaluation

Introduction

In interpersonal communications, an evaluation is a natural and ordinary element. Through the way in which we express our evaluations towards others, we construct different relations. In this process, we are defining our respective roles and, at the same time, we are clarifying our respective positions towards the other. Every time a person evaluates another, he shares and negotiates meanings that become relevant in handling the meeting of different identities.

Evaluations subtend diverse beliefs and opinions that we can psychologically identify in a system of values, socially constructed and made available, which translates what is morally accepted and what is desirable and more important.

All this can be studied, through a socio-constructivist lens, focusing on everyday communications and on the way people evaluate themselves respectively. Everyday life communicational fields often present the content of their representations through narrative organization (László, 2002). Any kind of communicative practices can be considered a means for the construction of a shared view of the world. Their content and the criteria of their organisation, can be represented by the individuals and their relationships. In interpersonal and intergroup relationships, relevant social categories and social evaluations can be objectified in the construction of different representations of identity (Chryssochoou, 2000).

This chapter introduces a model for the study of how evaluations are used in narratives to construct identities in a given context. Evaluations are treated as narrative elements that people use to set the boundaries of their and others' identity, each of the two framed in a

particular system of shared knowledge and values.

Every time we evaluate someone (a person or a group), we are providing our personal view as regards our beliefs, values and norms. As a consequence, the study of how an evaluation is expressed between two persons will be focused on the system of values implied in the evaluative relation, on the characteristics, emotionally and normatively connoted, of the evaluated person and on the evaluator's system of values, norms and beliefs.

The process of evaluation

Evaluation is a psychological process implied in the continuous process of understanding others, ourselves and situations. This process can be generalized if intended as a process of interpretation and attribution of meaning by somebody, who in applying it, activates elements of his own identity (experiences, representations, belongings etc.) in taking a position regarding the evaluated object. The interpretation becomes evaluation (mainly) for a hidden or explicit judgment related to the content. The meaning of the judgment (for example: conformism) and its degree (X is a rebel or conformist) reflects the pre-existent value-system of the evaluator at the moment of the judgment. This value-system can be modified, changed or reconfirmed by the evaluator through new experiences and information, reframing and re-establishing those pre-existing elements that are salient for the self in a coherent framework. Therefore, the meaning of the evaluation is strictly related to the identity of the evaluator.

All constructed meanings (of whatever object) include in themselves the relation with the subject of the construction who, beyond the cognitive elements accessible for him, uses even emotional and evaluative components in relation to the object. In this way, all type of communication about the object includes these three elements, what can differ is their degree of explicitness in the enunciation.

According to Habermas (1975), moral development, including the construction of the individual's own value-system, emerges during the socialisation through three stages linked to the development of identity and that of the symbolic universe of the individual.

From the concrete expectations and behaviours interpreted in terms of rewards and punishments, through more generalised requirements linked to the appropriation of social roles, the individual finally arrives at the creation of those principles which question the validity of the conflicting norms and roles. This hypothetic validity analysis needs the temporary suspension of a required behaviour or its different interpretation, which lead us to the universe of discourse. As these three stages occur, the actors and their expectations are assimilated into the symbolic universe. In the first stage, the purposes guiding behaviours are assimilated into their possible generalisations on the desire/refusal dimension. Only from the second stage are those needs present which are satisfied by the symbolic approval of the first reference person, or by the social recognition of the groups to which the individual belongs (Habermas, 1975). Therefore, in the course of socialisation, the value-system is built on the continuous generalisation, in abstract constructs (the values), of the behavioural expectations from the egocentric satisfaction of the primary needs, to the appropriation or refusal of socially shared motivations.

The evaluation gains meaning if it is communicated, presuming in this way at least a triadic relationship among subject (the evaluator), object (of the evaluation) and a real or hypothetic observer. We use the concept of observer (and not of receiver) for the active role that he/she/they has in the reception of the message. The active role is in the interpretation of the content. The more implicit the evaluation in the content of a message, the more the audience needs to activate its own representations, knowledge, and values in the process of interpretation. The degree of explicitness refers to the sharing of constructed meanings (in our case of the values imbedded in these meanings) between subject and audience. From the point of view of the evaluator, the degree of explicitness of an evaluation means how much he assumes a clear position regarding the evaluated object. This is also the case when the object of the evaluation is the audience or the evaluator himself.

However, the evaluation can also be expressed indirectly, embedded in a story. The narrator communicates the evaluation of somebody who is part of the story. In this way, the narrator, although distancing himself from the meaning of the evaluation (that belongs to someone else, a character in the story), defines his position in relation to the evaluated object indirectly. In this case, the position of the narrator and the interpretation

of the evaluation by the audience depend not only on the pre-existent relation that each of them constructed with the object of the evaluation, but also on the relation that each of them has with the evaluator, the character in the story. In this case, the relation required becomes more complex than triadic. Therefore the interpretation of an evaluation recalls the pre-existing knowledge and representation of the object evaluated, which, connected to the relationship with the direct and indirect sources of the evaluation and the values used, can modify the same knowledge and representations.

Narrative Identity and identity in narratives

Identity and, even more, social identification are central issues in the study of psychosocial processes. Through different levels of analysis, they can be useful in investigating the individual processes of self construction on the basis of various memberships, the dynamics of intergroup relations and the relation between the individual and the social/cultural context (Contarello–Nencini–Sarrica, 2007).

In line with recent suggestions coming from different authors, roughly joined under the wide framework of Social Representation Theory (Jovchelovitch, 2007; László, 2005; Wagner–Hayes, 2005), identity, far from being considered a stable construct, is rather an ever-changing concept strongly tied to time, which can influence and be influenced by construction processes of shared meaning (cfr. Breakwell, 1993).

Using the explanatory power of a metaphor, we could say that as a river that flows down its path, sometimes faster sometimes more calmly, sometimes straight sometimes tortuous, identity is never the same in different moments. Nevertheless, at the same time, like the riverbed dug on the field through the years, it always represents the same concept, the same reference.

The very definition of identity is based on the concept of time and temporally structured experiences: a person's identity is his or her own sense of self; of who they are. Or, to say it with Ricoeur's words, identity is the outcome of a continuously reconstructed biography (1991).

As Bruner (1987) proposed, life experiences, both concrete and symbolic, are organised

in narratives, and it is this final narrative, inserted in the social context and in the cultural setting, that guides people to action. The capacity to elaborate an action requires the necessary involvement of narrative elements like time (Ricoeur, 1980; Cupchik–László, 1994, Ehmann, 2004), perspective (László–Larsen, 1991; Pólya–László–Forgas 2005), and agency (László–Ehmann–Imre, 2002).

Identity, as a form of experience organization, emerges as a story, a narrative that positions personal experiences on a temporal line, giving them emotional qualities as well as values, norms and attitudes: the result is the communicable construct which we call "identity".

Identity, "far from operating in a vacuum" (Deaux, 2000:7), is part of the negotiation process of social "reality" (Breakwell, 1993) and, at the same time, an outcome of a situated system of shared knowledge. This is inevitably linked to the way in which knowledge is organized and used to produce other concepts. In other words the way through which identity is constructed is related to a system of knowledge (a metasystem), which serves personal and group purposes. In this field, Moscovici's Social Representation Theory has proposed how these metasystems are organised and structured (1984), but it is through the contribution of narrative psychology (Bruner, 1990) and the proposal of a narrative organization of social representations (László, 1997), that identity can be considered both the product and the evidence of culturally available narrative patterns.

A representational metasystem constitutes a *substratum* of shared meanings, which allows communication between members of a given society. It represents an archive to which everyone refers to make sense of experiences.

As a consequence, to study a group identity, as well as a personal identity, means to investigate also the content and the structure of the shared narrative representation in which identities are negotiated. The basis of this negotiation can be found only within relationships and by looking at the way people describe and evaluate each other through interpersonal and intergroup communication. By the use of particular evaluations as narrative elements for identity representation, people clarify their perspectives, as well as their values and shared beliefs.

In other words, when someone evaluates another person, he gives a statement to

communicate his position (judgement) towards one or more characteristics of that person. The use of *that* particular evaluation, determined by its specific linguistic form and its content, shows relevant information about the relationship in which identity is set, i.e. evaluator's intentions and attitudes towards the person/object of the evaluation, as well as the degree of generalisation of judgement that he aims to communicate. How and whom we evaluate is strongly dependent on our metasystems of knowledge (our models of person and relations, our values, our moral norms, our beliefs…), which are socially shared; in other terms, when we say something about someone, we are also saying something about ourselves and about our group membership.

In this sense, the study of evaluations provides us information regarding both the evaluated person and his qualities from the evaluator's perspective, and particular characteristics of the evaluator, from the observer's perspective, which are responsible for the evaluation expressed.

Values, carriers of evaluations

In our opinion, the content of an evaluation is given by the value-system of the evaluator. We evaluate others on the basis of what is important for us. Values – according to different authors coming from different scientific areas – were defined as conceptions of the desired, or the preferable ways of living and acting. They serve the individuals as trans-situational purposes or guiding principles (Kluckhohn; 1951; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994; Feather, 1996; Inglehart, 2000). Moreover, values provide standards and criteria for evaluating actions and their results, to justify opinions and conduct, to plan and to channel behaviour, to decide among alternatives, to compare the self with others, to engage in social interactions and to present the self to others. They are considered stable, but the importance of some values can change with life experience and with the rise of new roles and responsibilities (Feather, 1998).

The various approaches have in common the use of value system structures by which the cultures can be differentiated. In this way, according to Kluckhohn (1951), different cultures can be distinguished using "five common human concerns": *human nature* (bad,

mixed, good), the *relation to nature* (subordinated, harmonized, dominant), *sense of time* (oriented to the past, to the present, or to the future), *activities* (being, becoming, doing) and *social relations* (hierarchical, collateral, individual).

Schwartz (1994), in an inquiry involving 60,000 individuals, identified 10 general values that serve as guiding principles in life: *power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, super-grouping*.

Inglehart (1997, 2000), in his world inquiry, relates the economical changes and cultural-religious heritage of a culture to the changes of its value-system. According to his research results, values can be described over two interdependent dimensions: *strong versus weak secular-relational values* (religiosity, patriotism, authority, obedience, familism) and *strong versus weak values on expressions of the self* (freedom, support and practice of public expression, tolerance of non conformity, self-direction, human trust). The two weak poles stress the charges of the individuals, with the aim to contribute to the survival of the community, the two strong poles emphasize the possibilities of human choice, with the individual seceding from the community.

Hofstede (1980) analyzing questionnaires on work values collected in various nations, obtained five factors that differentiate among the cultures. The dimension of *power distance* explains how much people accept the unequal division of power. The u*ncertainty avoidance* gives us how people feel the discomfort of insecurity, of unstructured and ambiguous situations. The *individualism-collectivism* dimension, most adopted in the subsequent cross-cultural studies, explains how individuals provide for themselves, their immediate family or concentrate their efforts to the ends of their social group. The dimension of *masculinity-femininity* of a given culture stresses the relative importance of the self or that of the relations. The last dimension concerns the *long term orientation*, intended as the capacity to delay the satisfaction of the material, social and emotional needs.

Malle and Edmondson (2004) studied the folk conception of value. In the first study the results show that people are able to distinguish accurately among values, purposes and attitudes following two dimensions: from the general to the specific, and from the social to the individual. In the second study, they asked the participants to define the concept of value and the concept of purpose. For the participants values are beliefs, morals and

ideals to be preserved, because they serve as guides, and give sense to their life decisions. They are very important to defend and are non-negotiable, because they define who we are. Apprehended through the process of socialization, they can vary from one individual to another. In contrast, purposes are more individual, limited in time and oriented to the future. People want, or struggle for, something that they don't have yet. Thus values are social constructs, strictly related to the economic, social, and cultural context in which they arise, what people in that context can internalize through the process of socialization, and render as a structural part of their own identity, because they provide guiding principles in everyday life and in the relations with the others.

Tajfel (1981) explains social and intergroup relations using social-psychological concepts such as social identity, social comparison and psychological distinctiveness. The famous citation of Golding "all the people like us are we, and everyone else is they" describes why we need to make psychological distinctions. Through this process we define the boundaries between ourselves and the others, defining in this way not only ourselves, but also the others. The use of own values in relation to others furnishes the dimensions of meaning over which comparison emerges. The phenomenon of social comparison was described as the process through which people try to obtain a positive identity, but what we intend as positive or negative depends on those meaningful dimensions (values) that are important and salient for the individuals, and thus are used in the process of comparison. The choice is about the object of comparison and the value-dimension to use with the aim to obtain a positive identity. Jahoda (2001) described how we attribute a meaning to unknown people over the meaning attributed to us. He called inverse processes those stereotype constructions that European conquerors used to describe Japanese and Africans. In this process, the character attributed to the unknowns was the contrary of that recognized and positively judged in themselves.

We can find this egocentric and ethnocentric way of thinking also in the social sciences. The presented value-structures of the models described above almost always are assumed in advance. Thus the results of these cross-cultural studies can show us differences in these predefined schemas that include the scientific and even the cultural baggage of the scholars, without the possibility that new meanings can emerge.

In the following section, we will present a model that can be used in the study of values,

without a preexistent model on the definition of their meanings. What we presume is that values, as structural parts of the (personal and social) identity, become (re)structuring points of the narratives creating their inner moral coherence. In the study of personal and social evaluations in a story, values of the individual and their importance will appear in their narratives. The proposed model of analysis tries to take into consideration that the meaning of an evaluation, the used abstraction of it, the recalled interpretation to capture the evaluations and their positive or negative valence depends, beyond the choices of who narrates, mainly on the cultural and historical context in which they emerge.

A model for capturing evaluations in narratives

The starting point for any psychological study that aims to investigate the construction of meaning is communication, and subsequently language, as the most important communicative tool for humans (László, 2004). As a consequence, the way in which evaluations, as narrative elements, can be intentionally used to set identities in a dialogical perspective can only be studied focusing on language and on its use in everyday communication.

Pólya, in the next chapter of this book, will sum up two different approaches to the issue of meaning through a bibliographic re-examination: the narrative psychology and the cognitive approach. He points out the lack of experimental research to study the construction of meaning, listing some of the few works in the field. In this chapter, we are going to present a model to study evaluations in narratives. Our work is part of a wider project that aims to develop a tool for computerized content analyses of texts of relevant psychological and narrative constructs (László, 2005) like emotions, subjective perspective, activity-passivity, avoiding-approaching, subjective time experience, mentalisation, etc.

The psycholinguistic model on evaluations (PLME; Nencini–Bigazzi, 2006; Bigazzi–Csertő–Nencini, 2006) arises to provide a link between these theoretical aspects and research practice, i.e. to give a theoretical *substratum* for the development of a tool for the automatic analysis of identities in texts. We then tried to formalize, in a model

structured by psychological dimensions, the way through which people describe and refer to each other with evaluative purposes.

In contemporary social psychology, when researchers want to study the psychological consequences of descriptions by means of language use, the Linguistic Category Model (LCM; Semin–Fiedler, 1988, 1991) is often employed as framework of reference. As known, the LCM states that the dimension "abstract" – "concrete" is salient when people describe in-group and out-group behaviours. In particular, the Linguistic Intergroup Bias (LIB; cfr. Maass [et al.], 1995) predicts that positive behaviour displayed by an in-group member will be described in relatively abstract terms, whereas the same behaviour shown by an out-group member will be described in relatively concrete terms. The reverse is true for negative behaviours.

The LCM can be used to classify verbs and adjectives used in the interpersonal domain to represent actions (e.g., to help, to cheat) and states (e.g., to like, to hate) between people, as well as their more enduring characteristics or traits (e.g., helpful, aggressive). Social behaviour or action entails (amongst other forms such as prosody, gestures) messages that are composed by means of linguistic tools.

Following the LCM assumptions, the psychological processes of the transmitter determine the shape of the type of action described. The purpose of the message is to shape the cognitive representation of the recipient, thereby influencing the recipient's psychological processes and response. This can be achieved by means of linguistic resources that are socially available.

How a message is composed indicates how the transmitter wants to structure a recipient's representation of the communication. The message therefore gives information about the goals that the transmitter is pursuing. Finally, it is possible to specify what psychological impact the message is likely to have upon a recipient on the basis of how the message is composed.

Then according to the LCM, studying the way in which information is transmitted, that is, analysing the different uses of linguistic resources, it should be possible to reveal the link between action and cognition. In other words, it should be possible to trace back the direct effect of a psychological process on the receiver's cognitive representations. Meaning, in these motivated communications such as in the case of a description of

another person, should then reside inside linguistic acts, encapsulated, to be then ingested by the receiver who obtains, in this way, an accurate representation of it, a sort of a copy of the original meaning.

This position is clearly not lacking points for potential criticism. From a dialogical and socio-costructionist perspective, trying to define the exact boundaries of meaning of an evaluation is a hazardous act. Indeed, our aim is not to find out the objectivity of an evaluation and, as a consequence, of identities as if we could rise over the relationship and out of the sphere of shared meanings. Rather, our goal is to depict how identities are represented by means of situated and contextualized evaluations, from a particular perspective, one amongst others, which is the perspective of common sense, of highly shared knowledge.

Translating the conceptual LCM assumptions for our purposes, we can structure our model along the "conceptual vs. descriptive" dimension, as regards the different linguistic intention to refer to someone's identity. The "conceptual vs. descriptive" dimension follows Semin & Fiedler's (1988) distinction about the different levels of abstraction: references to the evaluated individual can be expressed from descriptive statements, like physical descriptions and actions, to conceptual expressions, like figurative images and concepts. The descriptiveness is strongly related to the perceptual features and situational embedding of the individual under evaluation.

In addition, we introduced another dimension that can take into consideration the specific context in which identities are set and the degree of shared knowledge implied in reference to a particular identity. Besides the "conceptual vs. descriptive" dimension, the "explicit-implicit" dimension refers to the degree of shared knowledge required to understand the evaluative communication. The more an evaluation is explicit, the more it is expressed through words and expressions with highly shared and decontextualized meaning. This requires a lower level of interpretation and fewer inferences by the receiver. In an implicit evaluation a higher level of shared meanings are required. In this case, the process of understanding is strongly related to the context.

These two dimensions, integrated together, delimit the linguistic field through which an evaluation can be expressed and provide enhancement of the different degrees of contextualisation vs. generalisation. As can be seen in Figure 1, proceeding from the

bottom to the top, five different categories are presented, corresponding to statements which show major intentions to generalize the evaluation.

Figure 1 – Psycho-Linguistic Model of Evaluation.

The theoretical definition of the "conceptual vs. descriptive" dimension is slightly but sensibly different from its use in the LCM: in the LCM, indeed, an abstract description indicates an assertion that contains general qualities, dispositional and immutable traits about the person in question. In this sense, for the LCM, the sentences "John is aggressive" and "John is fat" carry the same degree of abstraction. They each refer to an attribute that generally characterises John.

Whereas, in the PLME, a "conceptual" evaluation is a statement that refers to intangible and symbolic elements and which has the intention to generalise. The aim is to present the person (or the group) through a series of psychological characteristics. On the contrary, a "descriptive" evaluation refers to qualities and behaviours that are observable, tangible and that belong to the "here and now" of the situation.

As a consequence, the 5 categories shown in the model represent different ways through which an evaluator can testify to his or her personal position towards the object of the evaluation, as well as different aims to generalise the given evaluation. Each category can vary in the degree of shared knowledge needed to be understood as an evaluation. By means of different linguistic uses, and depending on the specific context in which a statement is given, the same evaluative category can be expressed with more or less explicit evaluative meaning.

In other words, referring to the relational triangle described above, we could say that the dimension "conceptual vs. descriptive" is related to the relationship between evaluator and object, while the dimension "explicit vs. implicit" is associated with the relationship between observer and evaluator. The more the observer and the evaluator share a common metasystem of knowledge, the more the evaluation of an object is comprehensible and explicit.

Let's see in more detail each category definition.

Descriptive states indicate those linguistic statements in which the evaluation is expressed by means of descriptions and/or physical qualities of the object, as well as through roles and concepts referred to the evaluated individual.

> Ex.   A is blonde.
>
> A is a gypsy.
>
> The little Sicilians.

The content of these evaluative forms is highly contextualized and needs more inferences to be understood by the receiver. The agent of the evaluation does not take an active and clear position. He tries to express his judgement through a distant and concrete perspective. This type of statement expresses objictified content about the correspondent, more abstract concept; beyond the concrete and descriptive meaning of the expressions used, descriptive statements aim to communicate attributes, norms and values associated to that particular category by the group to which he feels he belongs. The different degree of understanding of these implicit meanings is therefore strongly linked to group membership.

Descriptive action verbs are associated to physical actions. The use of these verbs indicates the intention to describe a single, observable event, preserving its perceptual features (Semin, 2004).

> Ex.   A punches B.
>
> A hugs B.
>
> A is running away.
>
> A cries.

On the basis of the relational aspect of the evaluation, this category can be further divided into two sub-categories: as shown in Figure 1, we can consider "physical actions" those expressions, like "A cries", in which the evaluation is lacking of an explicit relation and therefore has a more implicit and descriptive content (cfr. McGuire–McGuire, 1980, 1981). In the same manner, we can call "social actions" those evaluations expressed within an explicit relation, like "A punches B".

The category called *Interpretative action verbs* represents those actions that describe a general class of behaviours and that have lost clear references to concrete and perceptual elements of action. The verbs used in these evaluative statements are figurative: they

describe actions in an abstract way. As a consequence, these verbs will more likely express a moral content.

> Ex. A hurts B.
>
> A courts B.
>
> A has challenged B.

In this case, the evaluative expression does not describe any observable action: it is the receiver who needs to interpret the statement.

Psychological state verbs are constituted by linguistic elements that describe internal states of the individual. Evaluations are expressed through the declaration of the feelings of the person in a given moment. Psychological state verbs describe more conceptual and decontextualised situations than those previously described. In this case, an empathic perspective is given to the receiver. The object of the evaluation is experienced through his emotional state: this leads to a subjective evaluation, which is not given on the basis of a dispositional feature of the person, and thus it is more changing and situated.

> Ex. A hates B.
>
> A loves B.
>
> A do not depend on B.

Also in this case, referring to the different subject's evaluative intentions, it is possible to find two different sub-categories: the psychological states can refer to the object's emotional state (*implicit relation*), like for example "A is sad", or they can express an evaluation within a specific relation (*explicit relation*): "A hates B". Following the two sub-categories, evaluations expressed through psychological states without a clear relation more than psychological states with explicit relations have the aim to generalize and decontextualize.

Furthermore, the psychological states clarify the evaluator's position towards the object: he has to take the object's perspective to assess his mental state. For this reason, evaluations given through this category are the most empathic. These kinds of evaluations are out of the concrete situation and give the possibility to the receiver to identify herself with the evaluator.

Finally, *evaluative states* include the most conceptual expressions through which an evaluation can be given. These expressions are the most common way by which attitudes

are defined. From the linguistic point of view, this category is constituted mainly by adjectives: they generalize the evaluations through different events and describe only the object (Semin, 2004). Compared to psychological states, evaluative states take more distance from the evaluated subject: they describe his by means of socially accepted norms and values that are important for the evaluator.

> Ex. A is aggressive.
>
>   A is nice.
>
>   A is loyal.

Evaluative states express generalizations towards the object. These evaluations are very powerful because they depict the individual through widespread and meaningful features, in which a high level of consensus is supposed. Moreover, they clarify the evaluator's position towards the evaluated object.

A new tool for the automatic analyses of texts

Narratives carry psychological meaning, which can be uncovered by different techniques, like content analysis, focusing on particular expressions. These expressions can be single words, like adjectives ("intelligent"), nouns ("thief"), or verbs ("to steal"), or else they can be represented by different terms together ("Don't behave like a fool!"): our aim is to provide an instrument that can go beyond the mere single word, and that can comprehend as many different kind of expressions as possible.

Contemporary empirical studies in different fields of narrative analysis exploit new research technologies and transform qualitative aspects of psychological meaning into quantitative data for testing psychological models (László–Cupchik, 2003).

At the moment, there are several softwares that help the researcher to analyse textual data (cfr. Atlas.ti, QSR Nud.Ist, Spad.T, Alceste…): these tools offer the possibility to reduce, through different procedures, large amounts of "words" into a smaller number of categories. These categories can then be interpreted according to the researcher's hypothesis and expectations. The tool we are working on, and that we are going to propose, will provide the opportunity to analyse texts on a particular psychological

dimension (evaluation) by means of a dictionary which goes beyond a collection of single words and that take into account more complex linguistic forms.

Starting from the Regressive Imagery Dictionary elaborated by Colin Martindale (1975; 1987), several kind of dictionaries have been developed for computerized content analysis which have been instrumental in testing various psychological hypothesis (for some example, cfr. the "Motive Dictionary" by Hogenraad (2003).

For narrative analysis, computer aided tools offer an advance over exclusively qualitative or quantitative methods. These tools have the capacity to perform quick hypertext analyses and handle huge amounts of textual data. This is particularly important for the narrative approach to social representations, because it can penetrate the unstructured content-aspect of narratives. Of course, both content aspects and structural aspects can be studied in combination.

The final aim of our proposal is to create a software that can be used to analyze a large amount of textual data, revealing how characters evaluate each other. This instrument will offer useful indications about the content and the language specificities of the different evaluations in the text and, furthermore, quantitative data about the frequencies of specific categories and expressions.

Anyway, to find the most adequate narratives and to construct the most relevant analytics should always remain the innovative task of the researcher and should not be delegated to statistical heuristics – however sophisticated (László, 1997).

Possible uses of the model

As for all the modules in the wide project aimed to develop automatic text analysis (coordinated by László) we use the interface of the program Nooj (www.nooj4nlp.net) that can allow us to construct basic dictionaries and complex grammars on the linguistic markers of the various psychological dimensions. For the dimension of evaluation, we are finishing the development of the dictionaries and of the local grammars in Italian and in Hungarian language according to the categories of the Psycholinguistic Model on Evaluation (PLME). The tool that we achieve will able to capture automatically not only

the evaluations, but even their level of conceptualisation, and their positive, negative or contextual dependent connotation (defined in the dictionaries by the consensus obtained from mother tongue judgers).

The instrument will be used by us and by our colleagues in the near future, in research concerning narrative identity construction in novels, and political discourses, as well as intergroup relations or social memory. One of these research projects regards how the relation with the majority contributes to the identity construction of gypsies. The project tries to investigate how the evaluations of the majority group influence the identity construction of gypsies and their conception of gypsiness, without any possibility to absolve and to justify negative evaluations (Bigazzi). Another research project concerns the persons involved in the Hungarian historical event of 1956. Having obtained the social network of the event (by who mention whom in the interviews deposited at the Oral History Archive of Budapest), then applying the instrument of evaluation, we will investigate the evaluation of these relationships (between the narrator and the mentioned people) and the values mainly used in the interviews in relation to the historical event (Szvetelszky). In a wide longitudinal research project on history schoolbooks, the evaluation module will be applied with other modules with the aim of studying how the representation of a historical event (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) and of that the involved people changes in time (Vincze).

The first application in Italian concerned the inquiry of parliamentary discussions regarding the institutionalisation of the "Remembering Day" in memory of the victims of the foibe massacres in Istria (Nencini–Pastorino, 2007). The analyses show that the right-center and the left-center political exponents, although all of them oriented positively towards the dispositions, used different communicative modalities to describe and to evaluate the events and the individuals involved in the massacre: the right-center exponents were concerned mainly with narrating events identifying clearly the "goods" (the Italian exiles) and "the bads" (Slav partisans, communists) the exponents of left-centre concentrated more on exerting strategies of self-justification through re-evaluation of the ingroup in the past and in the present.

In this article, we described the relation between the psychological concepts of evaluation, values and narrative identity with the aim of presenting a model that in part

can operationalize the construct of identity as well as that of social reality, structuring how interpersonal and intergroup evaluation can appear in communication, from simply stories and narrations, to scientific (for example.: historical) or to more sophisticated literary communication.

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