Nicola Brocca, Ewa Borowiec and Viviana Masia[1]

Didactics of pragmatics as a way to improve social media literacy

An experiment proposal with Polish and Italian students in L1

Abstract. Education plays a crucial role in equipping today's and future citizens with the necessary intellectual tools to critically read or listen to propagandistic messages. Often enough, the persuasive strength of these messages lies more conspicuously in what they convey implicitly than in what they overtly express. The paper presents the first results of a pilot study with students from the University of Krakow involved in a research-based seminar on implicitness in political tweets. Subsequently we describe an experimental project aimed at honing and/or reinforcing high school students' abilities to detect implicit content in a corpus of Twitter messages produced by Italian and Polish politicians. The project, which also focusses on manipulative linguistic strategies in a comparative perspective, intends to sensitize laypeople as well as those engaged in the field of education to the challenges and threats posed by social networking sites (SNS) as they contribute to a massive diffusion of information, thereby forging a tacit consensus based on blindly accepted beliefs and ideologies.

Keywords. Implicit communication, L1 pragmatics education, social media reading competences, digital democracy, Twitter, Polish, Italian

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1   This article was conceived by the three authors together. NB wrote the introduction, §2, §3, and §7, VM was responsible for §4, EB wrote §5. VM and NB jointly wrote §6.

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Pragmadidaktik zur Förderung der Social-Media-Kompetenz

Ein Versuchsvorschlag mit polnischen und italienischen Studierenden der L1

Zusammenfassung. Die Bildung spielt eine zentrale Rolle darin, die Bürger von heute und morgen mit den notwendigen intellektuellen Werkzeugen auszustatten, um kritisch mit propagandistischen Botschaften umzugehen. Oft liegt die Besonderheit dieser Botschaften nicht darin, was offen ausgedrückt wird, sondern in der Vermittlung impliziter Inhalte. Der Beitrag beschreibt die Ergebnisse eines forschungsbasierten Seminars mit Studierenden der Universität Krakau. Anschließend wird ein experimentelles Projekt dargestellt, das darauf abzielt, Schülerinnen und Schülern die notwendigen Kompetenzen zu vermitteln, um implizite Botschaften in einem Korpus von Twitter-Nachrichten von italienischen und polnischen Politiker*innen zu entdecken. Da SNS durch die rapide Verbreitung von Informationen dazu beitragen können, unhinterfragten Konsens auf Basis blind akzeptierter Überzeugungen und Ideologien zu generieren, zielt das Projekt mit Fokus auf manipulative linguistische Strategien in vergleichender Perspektive darauf ab, sowohl Laien als auch im Bildungsbereich Beschäftigte für die Herausforderungen und Gefahren von Social Networking Sites (SNS) zu sensibilisieren.

Schlüsselwörter. Implizite Kommunikation, L1-Pragmadidaktik, Social-Media-Lesekompetenz, digitale Demokratie, Twitter, Polnisch, Italienisch

1 Introduction: Relevance of the research and structure of the paper

Classical mass media, such as television and press, have lost their leading position in the diffusion of news and political information today (cf. Weischenberg 2018). Social media like Twitter have the upper hand, with a larger audience which is itself involved in spreading the news, sharing, posting, liking, pinning, snapping opinions. On the one hand, the diffusing force of social media has been celebrated as a tool for democratization (as, for example, in the context of the Arab Spring), but, on the other hand, it also appears to be a threat for democracy itself (see, for instance, the Cambridge Analytica scandal).

As national and international organizations remarked (cf. Grizzle et al. 2013; KMK 2016), education has a crucial role in providing the citizen of tomorrow with intellectual tools to critically read and comprehend the messages spread over social networks. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD), based on the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012, underlines the necessity of teachers and parents to help students become more critical consumers of internet media by enabling them to make informed choices (OECD 2015). The European Commission promoted the Digital Competence Framework 2.0 (Vuorikari et al. 2016), in which "evaluating data, information and digital content" is listed as a key competence. In Germany, the enhancement of media competences is recommended by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the federal states (German Kultusministerkonferenz, from now on KMK), and reading and understanding information online have been scheduled in L1 and L2 educational programmes in many federal states.[2] Also, several other education systems are responding to the challenges raised by social media, as the cases of Italy and Poland clearly show.[3]

Although theoretical suggestions and indications are being made, only few practical applications have been established as yet. Neither the approaches to

2   In the German context, the following sources are worth mentioning. The Strategy Paper of the standing conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK 2016, S. 16) sets the following goals in media competences: "Informationen und Daten analysieren, interpretieren und kritisch bewerten". The education plan of the federal state Baden-Württemberg (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2016a) sets the following goals for foreign languages: "Schülerinnen und Schüler können Texten explizite und implizite Detailinformationen entnehmen." For German as L2, see the following goals: "Schülerinnen und Schüler können Funktionen und Wirkungsabsichten von Medien unterscheiden, vergleichen und kritisch reflektieren, […] Informationen bewerten, aufbereiten und kritisch hinterfragen, […] sich kritisch mit der Wirkung und dem Einfluss der Medien auseinandersetzen. Sie sind in der Lage, sich eigenständig und kritisch mit ihnen [digitalen Medien] auseinanderzusetzen und einen differenzierten eigenen Standpunkt weiterzuentwickeln." (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2016b)

3   In the Italian context, the national plan for a digital school sets the following goals: "occorre rafforzare le competenze relative alla comprensione e alla produzione di contenuti complessi e articolati anche all'interno dell'universo comunicativo digitale"; "I nostri studenti, come raccomandato anche dall'OCSE, devono trasformarsi da consumatori in 'consumatori critici' e 'produttori' di contenuti […] digitali, […] in grado di sviluppare acquisire autonomia di giudizio" (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca 2015, p. 29, 70). The goals for the foreign languages are set as follows: "Lo studente elabora testi […] su temi di attualità […] riflette […] sugli usi linguistici ([…] funzioni, aspetti pragmatici, ecc.), anche in un'ottica comparativa". In the Polish context, the ministry (Ministra Edukacji Narodowej 2018, p. 7) sets the following goals: "In Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego dla czteroletniego liceum ogólnokształcącego i pięcioletniego technikum". Ibid. (p. 3): "Ponieważ środki społecznego przekazu odgrywają coraz większą rolę, zarówno w życiu społecznym, jak i indywidualnym, każdy nauczyciel powinien poświęcić dużo uwagi edukacji medialnej, czyli wychowaniu uczniów do właściwego odbioru i wykorzystania mediów."

enhance the comprehension competences in social media nor the effectiveness of corresponding didactic approaches have been sufficiently evaluated. Our approach, based on the teaching of a crucial aspect of linguistic pragmatics, such as implicit communication strategies, aims at partially filling this gap in contemporary research. We assume that understanding social media communication can be improved by a solid body of pragmatic background knowledge of how linguistic implicitness works in everyday language. An experimental design will provide evidence to verify this hypothesis. We will describe the setting and the research hypotheses of an experiment we intend to conduct on L1 speakers of Polish and Italian about the recalling and processing time of implicitly and assertively transmitted information in tweets. The population tested will be composed of students enrolled in our respective universities (Rome, Krakow, and Innsbruck[4]). In §2 of this article, we will address the role of pragmatics in language education in a brief overview. The third section (§3) will define the educational goal of our proposal underlining the importance of SNS as a medium to afford transversal topics in school contexts. The fourth section (§4) will provide the reader with further information on essential aspects of pragmatics in implicit communication. In §5 we will describe the results of an action research experiment in retrieving and evaluating implicit contents conducted with Polish university students. The sixth (§6) section will define the planned experiment with university students from Italy, Austria, and Poland. Finally (§7), we will discuss our expectations and possible ways to transfer the approach to the language classroom as well as to teacher training programmes.

2   Teaching pragmatics: State of the art

Research in pragmatics has had an enormous impact on language didactics: Recently, the output of pragmatics studies has been received in L1 didactics especially in the field of (im)politeness studies (cf. Locher, Pizziconi 2015). Sbisà (2007, p. 199) reports some experiments with school classrooms about the detection of implicitness in L1 text books. However, the role of an explicit pragmatic knowledge for developing a deeper text comprehension is still greatly underestimated in school syllabi.[5] The ways in which elements of pragmatic research, such

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4   We intend to test L1 speakers of Italian studying in Innsbruck.

5   It should not come as a surprise that pragmatics has been investigated more deeply in L2 didactics research than in L1 (cf. Irun, Baiget 2006; Morón, Cruz, Amaya, Lopéz 2009; Povolná 2012; Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan 2006, Nuzzo, Vedder 2019; for an overview of the Italian context, see also Nuzzo, Santoro 2017, for research on teaching implicatures in ESL see Taguchi, Roever 2017, p. 224; Taguchi 2015) since pragmatic competences in a L2 are fun-

as conversation analysis (cf. Brünner, Weber 2012), pragmatics of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) (cf. Albert 2013; Androutsopoulos 2007), or studies on implicitness (cf. Garner 1971; Grice 1989) transfer to teaching practices remain research desiderata. On the other hand, it is still not clear which relevance (meta-linguistic) pragmatic competences can have in the curriculum of language classes and in the curriculum of teacher trainees to meet with the standards of effective language learning. Introducing competences in pragmatics into language class-room poses the following questions: Is the understanding of pragmatics bene-ficial to students in reaching the goal set by the education standards (see notes 1–2)? Which communicative competences can profit the most from education in pragmatics?

A basic problem in introducing pragmatic knowledge to teaching practice is the fact that pragmatics, for the most part, works as a purely descriptive tool: evalu-ation criteria whether a pragmatic choice is more or less opportune undergo per-sonal, sometimes implicit and highly context-dependent judgments. In contrast, language teaching prefers to give an evaluation on whether certain communica-tive goals are reached or not (cf. Kotthoff 2009). Therefore, many teachers and scholars cast doubt on the efficacy of explicitly teaching pragmatics in schools (cf. Kasper 1997; Alcón Soler 2005). Nevertheless, in some contexts, it can be observed that students' mastery of a descriptive tool may be beneficial, as is the case with reading-comprehension competence. Furthermore, when analysing topics that require subjective evaluation (e. g. assessment of political orientation or honesty), working with descriptive tools can allow a deeper and more inde-pendent reflection upon situations where merely evaluative tools would fail.[6]

damental for an effective communicative competence (cf. Hymes 1972). In this regard, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2011) gave fundamental impulses to reaching an effective use of pragmatic aspects in foreign language classes (cf. Maldina 2015; Del Bono, Nuzzo 2015). Function-based and task-based curricula as well as the communicative approach in SLE (Second Language Education) have been profoundly determined by the theories of Austin (1963) and Searle (1969).

6   Although most current SLE (Second Language Education) approaches are based on a prag-matics-oriented curriculum – at least since the introduction of CEFR – the explicit teaching of pragmatic aspects can be seen as a desideratum in SLE, too.

3 Pragmatic competences in social media understanding: Between media literacy and democracy education

As a consequence of digitization in the information sector, commercials and political propaganda found a new device for large-scale exposure on social networks. As opposed to 'old media' such as television, radio, and press, the 'new media', most prominently social networks, introduce a more direct flow of information from the source to the receiver that avoids the mediation through communication-professionals (journalists, spokespersons, etc.) altogether. In the case of political communication, Twitter will serve hereinafter as a prototypical example for communication on the web 2.0.

The microblogging service is known for the immediacy, conciseness, and efficiency of its messages (cf. Spina 2012; Frame, Brachotte 2015; López-Meri et al. 2017; López-García 2016). Politicians can communicate directly with their followers, and – theoretically – get an immediate response from them. Thus, far away from being structured according to low hierarchies and getting politicians to interact on an equal footing with all the other parts of society, political communication on Twitter still replicates the model of the 'old media', where one sender speaks to a large audience that is usually unable to interact with the source (cf. Brocca, Garassino 2015). The myth that politicians communicate directly and, thus, transparently on Twitter dissipates under more scientifically-based evidence (cf. Brocca, Garassino, Masia 2016; Spina 2012). As example (1) shows, some tweets are presented as an invitation for interaction (*What do you think?*), but comments are systematically disregarded by the politicians themselves:

(1)   Matteo Salvini, 3.03.2017: La "presunta vendita" del #Milan, che va avanti da quasi due anni, non ha mai fine … Cosa ne pensate? [The "alleged sale" of #ACMilan, which has been going on for almost two years, has never ended … What do you think?]

The 'politics as usual'-hypothesis (cf. Mascheroni, Mattoni 2013) excellently fits the political actors who tend to still rely on conservative communication strategies – especially, yet not exclusively, those who are part of the mainstream parties. In addition, tweets are denser in terms of implicitness than communication over 'old media' (cf. Lombardi Vallauri 2019, p. 241; Garassino, Masia, Brocca forthcoming) and these implicit messages are known to be more likely to fulfil manipulative functions than assertive ones (see § 4): for example in (1), Salvini introduced the question by preempting information with a definite description (*The "alleged sale" of #ACMilan*), which presupposes dirty affairs under the sale of AC Milan and hinders the reader from questioning the truth of the statement.

Given the current backdrop, the goals set by the educators to develop well-informed and conscious citizens are in need of a tangible and applicable model to improve the practical abilities in the critical reading of news in social networks like Twitter. Being able to extract and critically analyse information from a text becomes an indisputable key competence in an information society and *ad-hoc* education units aimed at honing this competence are expected to be integrated in school curricula and teacher training programmes. Discourse analysis of presuppositions and implicatures can provide readers of tweets with the competences to recognize the implicit contents carried by a message and rephrase them in their explicit form. As a consequence, not only should the readers be able to understand what is conveyed in an assertive way but also 'between-the-lines' contents which have not received a surface explicit encoding.

4   Pragmatics and implicit communication

'Between-the-lines' contents – or 'presumptive meanings', as they have also been referred to in mainstream literature (cf. Levinson 1983) – have been extensively investigated within the purview of pragmatics, i. e. within the linguistic discipline that deals with language use and, more precisely, with the way speakers use linguistic signs to achieve their goals in a conversation (cf. Morris 1938). Morris (1938) defined pragmatics as the domain of linguistics denoting the relation of signs to their interpreters (cf. Horn 2006), whereas syntax addressed the formal relation of signs to one another and semantics the relation of signs to what they denote. From Strawson (1950) and Grice (1975, 1989) onwards, discourse phenomena related to implicit communication were also included in the remit of pragmatic research, due to the crucial role played by context and the relation between speaker and hearer in calculating the meaning of unuttered contents in an interaction (cf. Levinson 1983; Stalnaker 2002). Subsequent contentions in the framework of Relevance Theory (cf. Sperber, Wilson 1986) have described speakers' capacity to decode implicitly conveyed meanings thanks to Theory of Mind abilities (cf. Premack, Woodruff 1978; Frith, Frith 2003), that is, the capability of construing speakers' intentions and mental states in an ongoing interaction.

Although implicitness can take the form of numerous linguistic expressions and communicative strategies, in what follows we will be mainly concerned with two discourse devices which have been the plank of much earlier and recent contention in the relevant literature on the subject (cf. Ducrot 1972; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1986; Lombardi Vallauri 2009), namely *presupposition* and *implicature*. Before outlining their properties and functioning in discourse, a few preliminary remarks on the interplay of implicit communication and persuasion are in order.

4.1 Persuasion through implicit communication

The idea that linguistic persuasion extensively draws on the unsaid much more than on what is explicitly said has been the bulk of many high-pitched debates on indirectness in language (cf. Pinker et al. 2008). Already Aristotle, in his Rhetoric (4th century BC, see translation by Rhys 2015), described persuasion as hinging on three main dimensions: the *ethos*, identified by the personal character of the speaker and his ability to appear credible and authoritative, the *pathos*, which is the speaker's capacity to appeal to the audience's emotions, and the *logos*, namely the words used to convince the audience. Of the three, pathos is a strong driving force of persuasion because its primary aim is to reduce the audience's ability to judge. Figures of speech belong to this level of persuasion and Aristotle contends that their effective use on the part of the orator can help modulating the positioning of contents in the fore- or background mental representation of the hearer. This allows the speaker to underline the strong parts and minimize the weak parts of an argument. This goal is also what implicit communication is targeted at since, by leaving some content under- or unexpressed, the speaker qualifies that content as not relevant to his communicative goal and thus as not worth being attended to by the receiver. Implicitness indeed proves to be an effective means to manipulate the receiver's attention (cf. de Saussure, Oswald 2009; de Saussure 2014) and, consequently, their critical judgments on the new contents introduced by the speaker into the shared common ground. But the effects of implicitness in political communication are far more rewarding than that. Scott (2012) observes that in implicitly conveying an idea, the speaker also reduces their commitment to its truth and, in so doing, keeps their position open for longer, which not only provides room for potential maneuvering but also keeps the speaker from being held accountable for what they have not said (cf. Sbisà 2007). This property also hinges on the impact that implicit communicative devices wield on human cognition. Notably, the persuasive effects of presuppositions are thought to be far-reaching because they "épargnent à la cognition le recours à un processing profond d'évaluation critique" (de Saussure 2014, p. 288). Secondly, in avoiding direct in-your-face remarks, the speaker does not cause offence and appears more polite in the opinion of receivers. Another upside of implicit communication is its function of leading voters to reach the conclusion you want them to reach without having straightforwardly imposed it on them (cf. Kierkegaard 1972). Needless to say, mastering the decoding of implicit meanings is not an easy task, which is why scholars in the field of pragmatics strive to clean up and outline the nature of linguistic phenomena responsible for projecting implicit contents in a message.

4.2 Presupposition, assertion and implicature: A working definition

In an utterance, some information can be presupposed. This typically happens when it already has a place in the common ground between sender and receiver (cf. Stalnaker 1973; Karttunen 1974; Garner 1971). In discourse, *presuppositions* are usually conveyed through dedicated lexical expressions or syntactic constructions, known as presupposition triggers (cf. Kiparsky, Kiparsky 1971; Sbisà 2007; Lombardi Vallauri 2009). Common categories of presupposition triggers are definite descriptions, change of state verbs, iterative adverbs, focus-sensitive operators, factive predicates, and subordinate clauses. An example of each type is given below (the syntactic domain of the trigger is highlighted in italics):

(2a) Definite description
       The barking dog is my neighbour's.
(2b) Iterative adverb
       John has broken my lamp *again*.
(2c) Focus sensitive adverb
       Also Maggie eats chocolate muffins for breakfast.
(2d) Change of state verb
       Emma *stopped* eating sweets two weeks ago.
(2e) Factive predicate
       It's strange that Mary *has not come to the party yet*.
(2f) Adverbial subordinate clause
       When Marianne got pregnant, she decided to leave home.

Contents not shared by the receiver prior to a communicative act are expected to be asserted by the speaker. In Searle's taxonomy (Searle 1969), *assertive speech acts* manifest the speaker's commitment to the truth of a proposition and, differently than presuppositions, characterize that proposition as the speaker's main contribution to the ongoing exchange. The relation of assertion to speakers' committal attitude in conversation had already been pointed at by Pierce, who maintained that "to assert a proposition is to make oneself responsible for its truth" (Pierce 1934, p. 384). Assertive utterances may take the form of declarative (3a), presentative (3b) and copular sentences (3c), among other strategies.

(3a) A robin has just alighted on my banister.
(3b) There is a spider under the table.
(3c) John is a doctor.

When the speaker conveys her/his intentional meaning by means of another literal proposition, s/he is giving rise to an *implicature*. This term was first intro-

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duced by Grice (1975) to refer to any content not overtly expressed on surface structure with which the speaker intends to contribute to the ongoing interaction. Put differently, an implicature features an aspect of the speaker's utterance without being part of what is said (cf. Horn, Ward 2006).

The linguistic tradition distinguishes between three types of implicatures based on their degree of availability on surface structure (cf. Levinson 1983). One class of implicatures, called *conventional*, originate from the logico-semantic meaning of an expression. This is the case of contrastive conjunctions like 'but' in (4), implying a semantic relation between the quality of being rich and the quality of being boring, associated with the expectation that rich people are usually boring.[7]

(4)   She is rich *but* funny.

Other expressions codifying conventional implicatures are conjunctions, such as *and*, *although*, etc., and additive adverbs like *also* or *even*.

Implicatures may also arise conversationally when the speaker's communicative intention can only be inferred from the evaluation of contextual coordinates such as the communicative situation, the interlocutors' shared knowledge and their mutual informative goals. Conversational implicatures may arise from indirect statements or replies to questions, as illustrated in (5):

(5)   A: Do you want some coffee?
        B: I'm about to go to sleep now.

Even in the absence of a straightforward "No, thank you", Speaker A infers Speaker B's refusal of the offer appealing to the context in which the interaction takes place and their knowledge of the energizing effects of coffee.[8]

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7   The space available does not allow us to dwell on other expressions generating conventional implicatures, for which we refer the reader to the references at the bottom of the paper.

8   Two other genres of implicature, namely the *generalized* and *scalar*, will not be tackled here. Again, for a more detailed description we refer the reader to the references at the end.

5   Developing the method: Pilot action research involving Polish students

Even though discourse strategies used to convey implicit meanings are valid interlinguistically (§ 4.1), their encoding is language-specific. Therefore, comparing different language-specific scenarios can be quite helpful to identify more general patterns that involve the use of implicit meanings in political discourse strategies. To begin, however, the focus on language-specific characteristics of the expression of implicitness will provide a solid basis for interlinguistic comparison and for a subsequent didactic transfer. In a pilot study we decided to focus on Polish, for which some of the prototypical linguistic devices described in the previous sections of this article are not available. For example, although the notion of definiteness seems to be a universal feature, it need not always be signaled through articles, of which Polish is a good illustration. Secondly, there might be discrepancies in the encoding of particular categories. For instance, an English iterative is encoded either through the addition of an iterative adverb, known also as a frequency adverb (*often*, *sometimes*, etc.) or semantically as part of the verb denotation (e. g. *The place is frequented by football fans*), while in Polish it is encoded on the morphological level. Similarly, aspect in Polish is realized morphologically: aspectual variants are normally treated as separate lexemes by Polish lexicographers, whereas in English, aspectual variation is purely syntactic. We conducted our study supported by the work of students taking part in a research-based workshop and we recorded their achievements and observations.

The pilot study involved five undergraduate students of English philology who, through their work on the project from November 2017 until July 2018, had had some previous experience with pragmatic interpretation of discourse. The task definition given to the students was: "Do politicians use implicatures and / or presuppositions in their tweets and to which pragmatic function do they associate it?". As working definitions of implicature and presupposition, the students used those suggested by Yule (1996). The emphasis of the study was on collaborative work and discovery learning, without any formal testing or evaluation. The workplan consisted of the following steps:

— Step 1: *Data collection* – the students collected a corpus consisting of 300 tweets written by Polish leading politicians from all major political parties.
— Step 2: *Tagging* – all collected tweets were labelled as containing, or not containing, implicit information and subsequently tagged as either presupposition or implicature.

— Step 3: *Pragmatic function identification* – the tweets were tagged as either representing attack, opinion, praise, or as purely informative. For lack of precise criteria, this was done on the basis of the students' intuition.

— Step 4: *Identification of linguistic manifestations of implicatures and presuppositions* – 120 tweets served as a subcorpus representing all the categories containing implied meanings identified in Step 3. Each tweet was closely examined in order to identify linguistic ways of encoding 'hidden' messages. The 120 tweets were composed of 60 implicatures and 60 presuppositions.

After data collection, the tagging of the implicit devices (i. e. presuppositions and implicatures) delivered the following results. For presuppositions, the most frequent manifestation proved to be different adverbial forms, typically denoting contrast (6a), concession (6b), comparison (6c), or preference (6d):

(6a)   Jacek Wilk, 7.07.2017: Tak sobie pomyślałem: skoro korumpowanie polityka ma konsekwencje prawne to czemu nie ma takich przy przekupywaniu wyborców? (500+) [I've been thinking: **if** corrupting politicians has legal consequences **then** why does bribing the voters come without a price? (500+) [a Polish family benefit]]

(6b)   Janusz Palikot, 25.11.2017: Zwycięstwo Lubnauer to **paradoksalnie** gwóźdź do trumny Nowoczesnej. Niestety. Niewiele też da ruchowi kobiecemu. Więcej jutro na moim blogu. [Lubnauer's victory is **paradoxically** the final nail in the coffin for Nowoczesna [a Polish political party]. Unfortunately. Little will it also benefit women's movement. More tomorrow on my blog.]

(6c)   Grzegorz Schetyna, 4.12.2017: Za nami **najbardziej** demokratyczne wybory w polskich partiach politycznych. Wybory w @Platforma_org! Ponad tysiąc osób ciężko pracowało jeszcze wiele godzin po zamknięciu komisji wyborczych. Dziękuję! [The **most** democratic elections in Polish political parties are over. The elections in @Platforma_org! More than a thousand people worked for a long time after closing the electoral commissions. Thank You!]

(6d)   Katarzyna Lubnauer, 9.12.2017: "Europę trzeba rechrystianizować" Nowy Krzyżowiec? @Nowoczesna jest za rozdziałem Kościoła i państwa. **Wolę**, **gdy** urzędnicy państwowi zajmują się lepszą organizacją państwa **niż** chrystianizacją czegokolwiek. ["Europe should be rechristianized" A modern crusader? @Nowoczesna supports the separation of Church and State. **I'd rather** see government officials work on the improvements of the state **than** christianize anything.]

This first class was followed by the use of change of state verbs, in Polish chiefly marked by a perfective prefix on the verb (7), the presence of different kinds of pronouns, typically performing the function of a determiner or marking anaphoric or exophoric relations (8), verbless or non-finite clauses with exclamatory function (9), ending with rather scarcely represented focus-sensitive adverbs or adjectives (10):

(7)　Adrian Zandberg, 15.11.2017: Dostępność i jakość ochrony zdrowia sukcesywnie się pogarsza. To wynik tego, że PiS **utrzymał** zbyt niski poziom nakładów na publiczną ochronę zdrowia. [Availability and quality of healthcare are successively deteriorating. It's a result of **maintaining** too low a level of expenditure on public healthcare by PiS.]

(8)　Donald Tusk, 14.06.2017: **Takie** słowa w **takim** miejscu nigdy nie powinny paść z ust polskiego premiera. [**Such** words in **such a** place should never be uttered by a Polish Prime Minister.]

(9)　Patryk Jaki, 21.09.2017: KW zajęła 12 tys od HGW za odmowe zeznań. **Koniec państwa teoretycznego**. Równość wobec prawa dla wszystkich i skuteczność państwa wobec silnych [KW fined HGW with 12,000 zł for refusing to testify. **The end of a theoretical state**. Equality before the law for everyone and effectiveness towards the strongest.]

(10)　Donald Tusk, 9.03.2018: Kiedy Jacek Kapica bezkompromisowo walczył jako minister w moim rządzie z przestępcami, **też** był atakowany podłymi metodami. Nie poddał się wtedy, nie podda się dzisiaj. [When Jacek Kapica, as a minister in my cabinet, uncompromisingly fought with criminals, he was **also** despicably attacked. He didn't give up then, he won't give up today.]

Categories	Attack	Opinion	Praise	Total
Adverbials	6	9	9	24
Change of State Verbs	7	5	7	19
Exclamations	4	1	2	7
Focus Sensitive Operators	---	1	1	2
Determiners and Pronouns	7	4	1	7

Table 1: Number of occurrences of different linguistic manifestations of presupposition in the selected 60 tweets by Polish politicians.

Precise figures concerning each linguistic manifestation of presupposition in the 60 selected tweets are given in Table 1. Based on current research focusing on the most salient and frequent pragmatic functions in political discourse on Twitter (cf. among others Graham et al. 2016; Brocca, Garassino 2015; Brocca et al. 2016; Garassino, Masia, Brocca forthcoming; López-Meri et al. 2017), we selected the most common functions: opinion stance, attack, and praise (see footnote 10).

While presupposition seemed to be triggered by a limited and fairly easy to pinpoint set of linguistic devices, implicature triggers proved to be far more difficult to pinpoint, as implicature often tended to rely on semantics and required contextual background knowledge.[9] Consequently, the list of possible triggering devices for implicatures significantly differs from the list of triggers of presuppositions and is to a large extent dependent on semantics rather than on syntax. Most typically, implicature is to be identified by the reader on the basis of proper interpretation of certain lexical items, which often form a specific semantic frame, as in (11) below:

(11)   Adrian Zandberg, 1.11.2017: PiS ma **sojusznika** w **sympatii** do *zbrodniarzy wojennych*. U nas uprawiają **kult** *Rajsa-Burego*, a w Chorwacji telewizja państwowa **uczciła** dziś *Slobodana Praljaka – zbrodniarza*, który popełnił niedawno samobójstwo w Hadze. Jest **mocny fundament** Trójmorza!
[PiS has an **ally** in the **liking** for *war criminals*. In our country they **worship** *Rajs-Bury*, today in Croatia the public television **commemorated** *Slobodan Praljak – the criminal* who has recently committed suicide in the Hague. What strong foundations for the Three Seas Initiative!]

Here, the implied message that PiS is similar to other 'contemptible' governments in their positive attitude towards disputable national heroes is conveyed by juxtaposing two contrasting semantic frames. We deal with a set of positive lexical items, in bold, juxtaposed against lexemes with highly negative connotations, in italics. Such juxtaposition provokes the reader to conclude that the behaviour of PiS is ridiculous.

Another interesting way of conveying implicature is the use of rhetorical questions, as illustrated by (12). In our corpus, the 8 rhetorical questions, listed in Table 2, constitute more than 13 % of all implicature projecting constructions:

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9   A recognition ratio of implicit devices by the students is not given, since a 'corrective' analysis in addition to that done by the students in order to see whether they discovered all instances of implicature was not within the question points of the study.

(12)   Dominik Tarczyński, 22.11.2017: "Sąd uznał 'aktywistów' z Puszczy Białow-
ieskiej za winnych zakłócenia porządku, ale nie wymierzył kary." **Może mi
to ktoś wytłumaczyć?** ["The court had found 'the activists' from Białow-
ieża Forest guilty of disturbing the peace, but it didn't administer the
punishment." **Can someone explain it to me?**]

Here, the implication that the behaviour of the court is irrational is expressed by
the last question, printed in bold.

In spoken language, implied meaning is often signalled to the recipient through
ostension (cf. Sperber, Wilson 1986), understood as deliberate behaviour of the
interlocutor aiming at pointing to the most prominent element, whose proper
identification activates cognitive processes responsible for proper interpretation
of the utterance. The range of ostensive behaviour is wide, and, among others,
includes prosodic elements such as intonation, stress, or pitch. We believe that
a similar function in written language can be carried by punctuation, as in (13)
below:

(13)   Dominik Tarczyński, 11.10.2017: Zadałem pytanie Sekretarzowi Gener-
alnemu Rady Europy, podałem przykłady i poprosiłem o **LOGICZNE**
wyjaśnienie. *Kolejny* raz zapadła cisza… [I asked the Secretary General of
the Council of Europe a question, I provided examples and asked for a
LOGICAL explanation …]

In this example, the highlighted LOGICZNE (logical), written in bold, serves as
an ostensive stimulus and most probably corresponds to higher pitch or slower,

Strategies	Attack	Opinion	Praise	Total
Comparison / Contrast	5	5	6	11
Punctuation	4	---	2	6
Semantics (Choice of Lexemes)	7	6	5	18
Modality	1	2	2	5
Rhetorical Questions	3	4	1	8
Focus Sensitive Operators	---	1	1	2
Exclamations	---	2	3	5

Table 2: Number of occurrences of linguistic manifestations of implicature in the selected 60
tweets by Polish politicians.

more careful articulation in speech and implies that the answers given by the Secretary General typically lack any logic.

A quite interesting way of conveying implicature is the use of modality-sensitive elements, chiefly modal verbs or adverbs. Modality, which in nature is non-factual and cannot be assessed in terms of truth values, naturally allows for making different kinds of implicatures, quite typically in Polish in impersonal constructions, which only imply but do not state who the agent will be:

(14)   Patryk Jaki, 2.11.2017: Warszawa przez duet HGW-Trzaskowski na świecie zaczęła się kojarzyć jako zielona wyspa dla mafii i złodziei. **Trzeba** to zmienić. [Thanks to the duet HGW-Trzaskowski, Warsaw has begun to be associated with this "green island" for mafia and thieves. This **needs** to be changed.]

At the same time, there is observable overlap between linguistic devices signalling presupposition and those signalling implicature and they include comparative and contrastive constructions (15), and rather infrequent use of focus-sensitive operators (16) or exclamations (17):

(15)   Joanna Senyszyn, 30.11.2017: Polska jest samowystarczalna, a nawet eksportuje. Wśród 25 najbardziej poszukiwanych przestępców w Europie jest dwóch Polaków i Belg polskiego pochodzenia. 500 Polek rocznie jest mordowanych przez mężów / partnerów. **A** PiS boi się uchodźców. [Poland is self-sufficient; it even exports. Among the 25 most wanted criminals in Europe there are 2 Poles and one Polish Belgian. 500 Polish women a year are killed by their husbands / partners. **And** PiS is afraid of refugees.]

(16)   Kamila Gasiuk-Pihowicz, 30.11.2017: Ujawnione zeznanie szefowej Rządowego Centrum Legislacji potwierdza **także**, że składane przez posłów opozycji zawiadomienia o możliwości popełnienia przestępstwa miały duży sens. [The released testimony of the head of the National Legislative Centre **also** confirms that the opposition members' complaint of a criminal offence made a lot of sense.]

(17)   Janusz Korwin-Mikke, 2.10.2017: Trwa wrzask, że pojawiłem się z p. Pawłem Popkiem; ale gdybym pojawił się z kimś niepełnosprawnym umysłowo, to by mnie chwalono … **Ot, czasy!** [There is a public outcry about me appearing with Mr. Paweł Popek; but if I'd appeared with someone mentally disabled, I would have been praised for it … **What the world has come to!**]

The implications of the pilot project are that the knowledge of specific linguistic manifestations of the presence of 'hidden' information facilitates the process of implicature and presupposition identification. As one of the participants reported, "once you know what tricks politicians use, the interpretation of political discourse becomes easier." Other comments included positive evaluation of "learning two interesting concepts – implicature and presupposition, not only in theory, but also in practice, which helped me to memorize these terms" and the ability to analyse political discourse and manipulation.

6   Intended experiment: Assessing Twitter use in implicit communication understanding

Following from the premises of the previous pilot study, we intend to perform a more structured experiment, which would further validate our working hypothesis: *videlicet* that the understanding of implicit meaning can be trained. The experiment will be conducted on two different groups of students of philology, 30 Polish and 30 Italian native speakers aged between 19 and 26. The target groups will receive basic instruction on the understanding of propaganda on digital media in their L1. Additionally, they will be provided information concerning the lexico-grammatical structures available in their native language for the implicit encoding of meaning in sentences (as, e.g., presuppositional triggers in Italian, or conversational implicatures as shown in example (5)) in order to be able to detect less honest and more challengeable content. For both Polish and Italian, the phenomena considered for the training and the experimental sessions are those described in §4 and §5. Presupposition and implicature features will be taught explicitly also in different text types. Depending on the level of previous knowledge in linguistics and pragmatics among the different target groups, the instruction time will range between one and three weeks. The control groups are composed of 30 Polish and 30 Italian students with similar demographic characteristics and receive no such prior training.

The aim of the experiment is to check if and to what extent such training enhances the detection and evaluation of implied information and manipulation encoded in political discourse. The initial hypothesis to be verified is that those students who have received training in implied message detection (experimental group) will perform better than those without such training (control group). Additionally, we will consider differences in responses according to the type of implicitness. Hence, the research questions are as follows:

— Does pragmatic training facilitate the detection and evaluation of implied information?
— Are all examined types of implicitness identified at equal rate?
— If the answer to the previous question is negative, what types of implicit communicative strategies are more easily identified and which types tend to pass unnoticed?

To examine hidden message detection, we will develop an online survey using LimeSurvey, focusing on presupposition, implicature, and assertion. The introduced stimuli will contain these three devices in equal proportions. The total number of tweets to be evaluated will amount to 96, with 30 stimuli of a kind for presuppositions and implicatures as well as 36 assertions, all of them balanced according to the pragmatic functions presented in Table 3 (i.e. opinion, attack, and praise).[10]

21 assertive items will be followed by a question asking whether certain information has been conveyed: in those cases, the requested information will differ

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10 In our assessment of the pragmatic functions of opinion stance, attack, and praise, we used the following definitions. We defined as "Opinion" the tweets that politicians write to express their stance by means of politically laden statements or even slogans:

(1) Matteo Salvini, 14.06.2018: Senza figli non c'è futuro. Aiutare mamme e papà sarà uno dei nostri primi impegni. [Without children there is no future. Helping mothers and fathers will be one of our first tasks.]

Under the function "Attack", we classified tweets in which politicians attack someone or a fellow politician or express criticism against some specific issue:

(2) Matteo Renzi, 17.03.2019: Oggi Nicola Zingaretti inizia il suo lavoro come Segretario Nazionale del Pd. Un abbraccio a lui e a tutta la squadra che lavorerà con lui. L'Italia si aspetta da PD una risposta allo sfascio di Salvini e Di Maio, non più polemiche interne. Avanti tutta! Buon lavoro, Nicola. [Today Nicola Zingaretti begins his work as National Secretary of the PD. A hug to him and to all the team that will work with him. Italy expects from PD a response to the collapse of Salvini and Di Maio, no more internal controversy. Full speed ahead! Good work, Nicola.]

The function "Praise" merges self-praise and praise extended to others: In these cases, politicians praise themselves and/or their political group for some achievement or behaviour (3), or express appreciation to other people for their achievements or for supporting a certain political party/agenda (4):

(3) Matteo Renzi, 30.01.2015: Centomila posti di lavoro in più in un mese. Bene, ma siamo solo all'inizio. Riporteremo l'Italia a crescere. #lavoltabuona [One hundred thousand more jobs in a month. Good, but we're only at the beginning. We will bring Italy back to growth. #therighttime]

(4) Matteo Renzi, 5.12.2016: La straordinaria avventura di poter contare su una guida autorevole e salda come quella del Presidente Mattarella. [The marvelous thing about being able to count on an authoritative and stable guide as the one provided by President Mattarella.]

Pragmatic Function	Condition			
	Presuppo-sition	**Impli-cature**	**Assertion previewed response "yes"**	**Assertion previewed response "no" distractors**
Attack	10	10	5	7
Opinion	10	10	5	7
Praise	10	10	5	7
Total	30	30	15	21
Total number of stimuli	**96**			

Table 3: Experimental stimuli classified according to their pragmatic function.

from the information presented in the item so the expected reply is "no". Those items work as distractors and will not be considered in the data analysis. Presuppositions used in the tweets are restricted to the definite description type.

The tweets used in the experiment will be extracted from authentic Twitter messages, which will be anonymized to reduce biases on the participants' personal political orientation or prejudice and shortened to isolate only one type of implicit category (either one of the two that are analysed, or none, in case of an assertion). To minimize the reading time dependency on the text length, all items will be adapted to a fixed number of words. Syntactic and semantic complexity will also be controlled through a Gulpease test (cf. Lucisano, Piemontese 1988). To separate the processing time from the recalling time, participants are not allowed to come back to the item and read it after having seen the question. In addition, the tweets will be displayed to students only as part of a unit consisting of 3–4 one-sentence tweets to mimic real-life conditions. The reading time and the time needed to reply will be tracked. Once the tweet has been fully understood (understanding check will start the survey), the test-participants will be able to move on to the target question at their own pace. The target question will gauge participants' recalling of the implicit content to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory by asking whether the message that has just been read explicitly conveyed a certain piece of information or not (cf. Drai, de Saussure 2016), as in (22):

(22)   On. Bianchi[11]: È giusto che il governo dichiari guerra senza riferire in par-
       lamento? [Congressman White: Is it fair that the government declares the
       war without reporting to the Parliament?]

Target Question: Did you find this information item in the message of Congress-
man White: "the government declared war without reporting to the Parliament"

Possible reply in a Likert scale:

1. Yes, for sure
2. Yes, I think so
3. I don't know
4. No, I don't think so
5. No, for sure not

The collected data will be analysed statistically with a Chi-square test and ANOVA
(cf. Levshina 2015) to verify the significance of the obtained data and possible
correlations between variables.

Prior to the test, participants will pass a short training session that shows items
containing implicit or explicit information followed by questions with both pos-
itive and negative expected responses. After the test, a debriefing session in the
form of a structured interview will be conducted to investigate misunderstand-
ings, difficulties, and impressions from the participants involved in the study.

It is expected that the results of the experiment will provide teachers and edu-
cators with useful information about the use of pragmatic training, firstly, for
decoding implied information in reading comprehension tasks, and, secondly
and less directly, for the appreciation and understanding of manipulative tech-
niques used in public discourse. If the results of the experiment strongly prove
our hypothesis, further steps can be taken to encourage teachers to extend such
training to other groups of students and ultimately to adapt it to secondary
school level and incorporate it into the syllabi of L1 and L2 classes.

7   Conclusion

The pervasiveness of social media has changed the way people form their opin-
ions. The characteristics of the medium, such as brevity, speed, and simplifica-

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11 Invented name.

tion of the message, prompt the use of implicitness, which can be utilized to manipulate readers easily (cf. Lombardi Vallauri 2019, p. 241). As a result, one's chance to form a free and informed opinion, to make conscious decisions within a democratic framework, is being challenged acutely by many SNS today, not least because of their idiosyncratic manner of packaging information. Hence, the relevance of our project is related to the need for new models of education that can provide students with key competences in reading and comprehending political messages on SNS. We think that reflecting on the messages of SNS can and should be a timely improvement in language curricula.

In this article, we posed the first cornerstones of a didactic project intended to promote SNS literacy supporting learners' competences in critically reading information on SNS. We suggest explicit pragmalinguistic knowledge as a crucial instrument to avoid manipulation through implicit communication. We presented the results of an action-research pilot study dealing with implicatures and presuppositions in tweets of Polish politicians with students from the University of Krakow. Students' research discovered patterns connecting the frequency of certain linguistic means and their pragmatic functions. Results from the action-research pilot study can be used for future investigation phases. We expect that gathering information from different languages (in our forthcoming project) will lead to the recognition of additional patterns connecting linguistic expressions and their pragmatic functions to allow for generalizations. We described the design of the forthcoming experiment in this paper.

Preliminary qualitative observations and reflections suggest that the application of pragmalinguistic theories to tweets can:

(a) be taught to students.
(b) be taught in a research-based workshop.
(c) sensitize students to improve their strategies for detecting implicatures in other text genres.

Media literacy and the ability to read between the lines are key competences we need in order to be able to ensure that people are capable of cautious discernment when processing qualitative information, thus developing an informed opinion. A number of scholars (Grice 1989; Sbisà 2007; Brocca, Garassino, Masia 2016; Garassino, Masia, Brocca forthcoming) have already built solid scientific models showing how persuasion in SNS works by connecting linguistics with political studies. Transferring scientific knowledge into an educational context will provide students at a critical age with the necessary communicative tools to

better navigate through an information-democracy where an increasing number of people seem to share beliefs that many may find inexplicable.

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