



Interpersonal-Communication and Language-and-Social-Interaction Approaches to Studying Conflict

L'approche de la communication interpersonnelle et l'approche du langage et de l'interaction sociale dans le cadre de l'étude des conflits

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Alena L. Vasilyeva

1. Introduction

Conflict is omnipresent in interaction. It can arise in a variety of ordinary non-confrontational interactions, for example, family dinners or children's activities (e.g., Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Dersley & Wootton, 2000; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990; Holt, 2012; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001; Schiffrin, 1990). At the same time, some types of discourse presuppose the presence of confrontation due to its nature such as mediation (e.g., Aakhus, 2003; Garcia, 1991, 2000; Greco Morasso, 2011; Heisterkamp, 2006; Jacobs 2002; Vasilyeva, 2012a, 2012b, 2015), ombuds (e.g., Harisson, 2003), debates (e.g., Bilmes, 2001; Budzyńska-Daca & Botwina, 2015; Jaworski & Galasinski, 2000; Neagu, 2015; Vasilyeva, 2016), media talk shows that aim to create controversy on certain issues for their audience (e.g., Greatbatch, 1992; Hutchby, 1996; McVittie *et al.*, 2011; Saft, 2006), court trials (e.g., D'hondt, 2009; Drew, 1992; Philips, 1990), negotiation (e.g., Dannerer, 2001; Putnam, 2010), and deliberation meetings (e.g., Black & Wiederhold, 2014; Kangasharju, 1996; 2002; O'Donnell, 1990; Sprain *et al.*, 2014; Tracy, 2010). It is not surprising then that conflict has been of great interest to scholars belonging to different traditions.

In this article I compare how conflict is viewed by a mainstream Interpersonal-Communication approach, which is positivist in its nature, and a Language-and-Social-Interaction approach, which takes a constitutive view. One of the criticisms leveled at interpersonal communication research concerns methods that scholars use to conduct

their studies. For example, Lannamann (1991) raised a point that although *research on interpersonal communication invites the investigation of a process that is by definition social and between people* (p. 187), most of the studies published in communication journals are based on observations of individuals but not interpersonal processes. Also, there is a lack of attention to actual material communication practices. In line with this, researchers emphasize the necessity of undertaking a social approach to communication research and studying actual behavior (Lannamann, 1991; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1992; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005). According to the constitutive view of communication, which treats a conversation as a social achievement, reality is socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Goffman, 1983; Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996; Mandelbaum, 1989). The communicators work together to organize their talk and make joint efforts to accomplish action. To get insight into communication processes and to understand communication phenomena, it is necessary to study them in naturally occurring conversations (Drew, 2005; Mandelbaum, 1989; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005; Sacks, 1984).

In the following sections I describe the ways these two perspectives conceptualize, operationalize, and explain conflict, and consider how they help to understand this activity.

2. Ways to Conceptualize Conflict

At the surface level, a mainstream Interpersonal-Communication (IC) and a Language-and-Social-Interaction (LSI) approaches define conflict in a similar way. Both view it as a process that involves disagreement, difference of opinion, and/or argument (Bonito & Sanders, 2002; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Cramer, 2002; Doucet & Aseltine, 2003; Folger *et al.*, 1997; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990; Grimshaw, 1990; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001; Sanderson & Karetsky, 2002).

However, at the deep level, these approaches are very different. Researchers employing the positivist approach (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Cramer, 2002; Doucet & Aseltine, 2003; Ridley *et al.*, 2001; Salisch & Vogelgesang, 2005; Sanderson & Karetsky, 2002) usually treat conflict as a context independent, abstract process, which is also one-sided as participants are treated as autonomous actors (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996). Besides, they focus on the role of participants and their characteristics rather than interaction itself (see Table 1).

Unlike positivists, researchers of language and social interaction focus on conflict talk and conflict *in talk* (Grimshaw, 1990) viewing it as an emergent interactional activity that is collaboratively produced and that involves opposition (Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Bilmes, 1981; Coulter, 1990; Eder, 1990; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990; Hutchby, 1996; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001; Vuchinich, 1990). For example, Kyratzis and Guo (2001) see this activity as *instances where a child disagrees with a partner's proposal or wants to do something ... that is resisted or likely to be resisted by another child* (p. 50). Vuchinich (1990) conceptualizes conflict as a *distinctive speech activity where participants oppose the utterances, actions, or selves of one another in successive turns at talk* (p. 118), which can take a variety of forms (e.g., arguments, disputes, quarrels, debates, and so on) (Grimshaw, 1990).

Table 1. Differences in how IC and LSI Approaches Conceptualize Conflict

Interpersonal-Communication approach	Language-and-Social-Interaction approach
conflict as a context independent, abstract process; one-sided as participants are treated as autonomous actors; focus on the role of participants and their characteristics; focus on conflict between participants	conflict as a context dependent, emergent interactional activity; collaboratively produced; focus on interaction (conflict talk and conflict <i>in</i> talk); focus on conflict between participants and conflict within social organization of interaction

Conflict is also viewed as context dependent, whether context is treated as *locally produced and transformable at any moment* (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 19) of interaction¹, advocated by conversation analysis, or it is understood in a broader sense (e.g., a setting, social roles of participants, relationships) employed by ethnography of speaking or discourse analysis (Blum-Kulka, 2005; Geertz, 1973; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005; Philipsen & Coutu, 2005). The former approach, for instance, can be seen in Vuchinich's study (1990) on the sequential organization of termination of two-person conflicts, whereas Eder's (1990) research where ethnographic information was used to interpret conflict exchanges in ritual conflict and normative conflict among white adolescent females from different social backgrounds can serve as an example of the latter.

Another difference between the two perspectives is that while the mainstream IC approach focuses only on conflict between participants, the LSI approach, specifically conversation analysis, is also interested in conflict within social organization of interaction, that is, conflict between different systems of constraints that are inherent in talk, for example, conflicting preferences (Pomerantz, 1978, 1984; Sacks, 1987; Schegloff, 1995). The main idea of preference organization is that a *second-pair part* (i.e., utterance types responsive to the action of a prior turn, such as answer, rejection, grant) should be in agreement with a *first-pair part* (i.e., an utterance initiating exchange, such as question, offer, compliment) (Pomerantz, 1978; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987; Schegloff, 1995). For example, in case of compliments (Pomerantz, 1978), in an agreement/disagreement system of constraints *agreements are generally performed as preferred seconds and disagreement as dispreferred seconds* (p. 81) and in an acceptance/rejection system acceptances are preferred and rejections are dispreferred. However, in compliments, these two systems are in conflict with a third one, namely, self-praise avoidance, that is, *a system of constraints which is enforceable by self and/or other* (p. 88).

All the above mentioned facts make it obvious that the mainstream IC and the LSI approaches conceptualize conflict in quite a different way. In the next section, I will consider how these two perspectives operationalize it.

3. Ways to Study and Operationalize Conflict

Geertz (1973) states:

operationalism as a methodological dogma never made much sense so far as the social sciences are concerned... But it had ... an important point to make...: if you want to understand what a science is, ... you should look at what the practitioners of it do (p. 5).

Methods social scientists employ predetermine the way they operationalize variables.

Researchers in the mainstream IC approach, which is deductive, start with hypotheses and do experiments or administer surveys to conduct their studies. As they already have an idea what they are looking for, they may measure conflict with different scales or code conflict-based interaction into predetermined categories (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Cramer, 2002; Doucet & Aseltine, 2003; Givertz & Segrin, 2005; Krishnakumar *et al.*, 2003; Kurdek, 2003; Ridley *et al.*, 2001; Salisch & Vogelgesang, 2005; Sanderson & Karetsky, 2002; Weger, 2005). For example, Doucet and Aseltine (2003) selected items from Conflict Tactics Scale to measure childhood family conflict and a 3-item measure to assess peer conflict. Ridley *et al.* (2001) used a modified version of the Conflict Inventory to assess conflict-related responses that include such items as threat, blame, insult, leaving room. Krishnakumar *et al.* (2003) operationalized interparental conflict on a 3-point scale with items like *My parents often yell and scream at each other when I'm around*, *My parents are mean to each other even when I'm around*, and *I often see my parents arguing*. In their majority, these studies deal with individuals' perception of conflict but not conflict itself (See Table 2). However, individuals may choose not to acknowledge conflict or may be even unaware of it. Moreover, conflict may be expressed in everyday life in the ways unexpected by researchers. For example, the study by Minuchin *et al.* (1978) on psychosomatic families revealed that the reason for children's having severe symptoms of their illness, which could not be explained by organic or psychological reasons, was, in fact, the child's involvement in parental conflict. According to researchers,

Parents unable to deal with each other directly unite in protective concern for their sick child, avoiding conflict by protective detouring. Or a marital conflict is transformed into a parental conflict over the patient and her management (p. 32).

These facts would not have been established with help of questionnaires but direct observation of families' interaction enabled the researchers to do it.

Table 2. Differences in how IC and LSI Approaches Study and Operationalize Conflict

Interpersonal-Communication approach	Language-and-Social-Interaction approach
a deductive approach; methods: experiments, surveys; measures conflict with different scales or codes conflict-based interaction into predetermined categories (e.g., Conflict Tactics Scale, Conflict Inventory); studies recollections of communicative acts and strategies, and the perception of conflict	an inductive approach; methods: conversation analysis, direct observation, discourse analysis; looks at communicative actions (the use of verbal and/or nonverbal means); studies real communicative situations

The LSI approach differs from the mainstream one in the way it operationalizes conflict in many respects. First of all, researchers use inductive methods to study it, for example,

conversation analysis, direct observation, discourse analysis. They do not start with assumptions about the phenomenon but are open to what this phenomenon will reveal. Second, scholars observe how this social activity works in real communicative situations. As Sacks (1984) noted, *we can start with things that are not currently imaginable, by showing that they happened* (p. 25). In their studies of conflict, researchers use two types of resources (Grimshaw, 1990). On the one hand, they may analyze resources that are available to participants and try to understand how participants orient to conflict and how they make sense of what is going on in a conversation. On the other hand, there are resources available to analysts. For example, conversation analysts may study how the activity is organized looking at the structural characteristics of the interaction with focus on turn-taking, overlaps, and sequences of moves.

In order to “measure” conflict, LSI scholars look at communicative actions. They may examine verbal and/or nonverbal means participants use to express or negotiate conflict. For example, Kyratzis and Guo (2001) look particularly at mitigated or indirect linguistic strategies including the ‘yes, but’ tactic, collaborative connectives (e.g., ‘and’), and mollifying statements², and aggravated or direct verbal strategies such as mocking rhetorical questions, aggravated commands, threats, negative polarity markers (e.g., ‘No!’), criticism, complaints, and insult. Alberts *et al.* (2005) in their study of couples’ daily conversations operationalized conflict as statements of disagreement, criticism, and complaint. In her turn, Eder (1990) focuses on speech acts of accusation, denial, insult and their sequences in direct conflict exchanges between adolescent females.

To sum up, the traditional IC approach and the LSI perspective differ greatly in respect of methods they use to study conflict and the way they operationalize it. Next, I will turn to how these approaches explain conflict.

4. Ways to Explain Conflict

Researchers adhering to the mainstream IC approach try to explain conflict in the context of different theories. One of them is attribution theory, of which the main assumptions are that people interpret behavior in terms of causal inferences (i.e., they attribute characteristics, intentions, and attitudes to other people based on their actions), and this influences their own behavior (Folger *et al.*, 1997). Sillars *et al.*’s (2000) study on thoughts and feelings of married couples they experienced during the discussion of conflict issues can serve as an example. Some of the findings were that everyone saw their communication in a more favorable way than their partner’s, and that there was a lack of correspondence between participants’ attributions about interaction and observers’ coding of it.

Some other theories applied in the conflict arena are social exchange theory and verbal aggressiveness theory, to name just a few. According to social exchange perspective, people are guided in their behavior by self-interest, and they exchange resources during each interaction. In this respect, *conflict behavior involves rewards and costs for participants* (Folger *et al.*, 1997, p. 22) and *conflict is triggered when the individual comes to believe that the other is responsible for unsatisfactory outcomes* (p. 23). It can be also applied to explaining the management of conflict. Thus, studying the association between intimacy goals and conflict resolution strategies, Sanderson and Karetsky (2002) found that individuals with a stronger focus on intimacy goals apply more constructive strategies (e.g., open communication, concern for one’s partner) to cope with conflict, and they are less likely

to ignore the conflict and are more likely to successfully resolve it, maintaining the relationship.

Verbal aggressiveness theory offers a different view on the nature of conflict. This theory is built on the assumption that aggression is a personality trait that is associated with argumentativeness. Individuals with a low level of argumentativeness are high in verbal aggressiveness as they try to compensate their lack of argumentative skill by aggressive forms of behavior (Folger *et al.*, 1997). Individuals who are verbally aggressive tend to be less concerned with relational goals during the conflict, use more frequently the control conflict strategy and ignore nonconfrontation and solution-orientation possibilities (Rogan & France, 2003).

Much research conducted in the framework of the IC approach explains conflict and ways people manage it in terms of individual factors and similarities/differences between them (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; Gallo & Smith, 2001; Kurdek, 2003; Ridley *et al.*, 2001; Salisch & Vogelgesnag, 2005). For instance, results indicate that there is some association between an individual's attachment style and conflict (Gallo & Smith, 2001). Thus, husbands' anxious attachment was positively correlated with their own reports and their wives' reports about marital conflict, whereas wives' anxious attachment was positively associated only with their own reports of marital conflict.

Investigating strategies in marital conflicts, Ridley *et al.* (2001) created four couple profiles based on the types of conflict responses (aggressive, withdrawing, and problem-solving) and similarity of husbands and wives' ways to manage conflict. The researchers distinguished two symmetrical (*distancing couples* and *engaging couples*) and two asymmetrical (*distancing husbands* and *distancing wives*) profiles. For example, engaging couples are those where husbands and wives are more likely to use problem-solving strategies, rather than withdrawing or aggressive ones. The results of Salisch and Vogelgesnag's (2005) longitudinal study on the change in management of conflict of interests and anger resolution strategies showed that the participants were more likely to use negotiation as adolescents than as children and were less likely to apply aggressive and distancing strategies. However, most of these studies do not look at what strategies participants use in real interactions and how these strategies are constructed but rather rely on participants' perceptions of how they act.

The findings also show that there is a relationship between individual characteristics and demand/withdraw pattern of conflict (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000). Specifically, the desire for closeness or more autonomy, three of the Big Five personality dimensions (neuroticism, agreeableness, and extraversion), as well as predisposition toward conflict expressed in argumentativeness, conflict locus of control, and flexibility, determine whether couples will engage in demand/withdraw communication or not. For instance, individuals who need more closeness in relationships and who are argumentative are more likely to demand and are less likely to withdraw in the process of interaction. In contrast, those individuals who are more flexible and agreeable tend to have relationships where the demand/withdraw pattern is infrequent. Like studies on conflict management, this large body of research is based on participants' reports about their behavior providing no evidence how and when personal characteristics are relevant in the course of interaction.

The studies have also revealed sex differences in managing conflict (Miller & Roloff, 2005; Rogan & France, 2003). Thus, men apply more control conflict strategies (Rogan & France, 2003), whereas women are more concerned with relational conflict goals and are more

other-directed (Rogan & France, 2003; Sillars *et al.*, 2000). In a way, results of Miller and Roloff's research (2005) contradict these findings. While women in their study report more willingness to confront their partners' teasing attacks, men state that they would less likely to do this, regardless of the social context. These contradicting findings raise the question whether measures researchers apply to gender are valid and whether gender is always relevant. As far as the first question is concerned, researchers always have to decide what they are going to assess: biological sex or psychological and sociological gender (Canary & Hause, 1993). In most studies researchers are interested in the effects due to the gender but rely on a dichotomous biological variable, which is an invalid measure in this case (Canary & Hause, 1993). Moreover, their view of gender as predetermined but not produced, as something taken for granted makes them treat it as something that is always relevant to the process of interaction. However, the omnipresence of gender in communication is rather questionable. Moreover, if the phenomenon is considered to be focal, it is necessary to show, as Schegloff (1987) states, *that it is relevant to the parties, and relevant to them at the time of occurrence of what we are claiming is related to them or contingent on them* (pp. 218 - 219). In order to show that gender is relevant, it should be treated as a dependent variable, something that is produced through communication (Canary & Hause, 1993).

Scholars taking the IC approach not only try to explain conflict but they are also interested in the impact it may have on relationships and other aspects. For instance, some research has examined the link between interpersonal conflict and relationship satisfaction (Canary *et al.*, 2001; Cramer, 2002; Ridley *et al.*, 2001; Sanderson & Karetzky, 2002; Weger, 2005). The findings (Sanderson & Karetzky, 2002; Sanderson *et al.*, 2005) show that strategies of conflict resolution affect relationship satisfaction (e.g., the use of constructive strategies was associated with increased satisfaction). The results are supported by another study (Ridley *et al.*, 2001) revealing that couples using more positive, problem-solving oriented conflict responses have higher assessments of the quality of their marriage. On the other hand, the demand/withdrawal conflict pattern resulted in the feeling of having been misunderstood (Weger, 2005). The perception of being understood in its turn mediated the association between this pattern and marital satisfaction. In a similar vein, the results of Ridley *et al.*'s (2001) research indicate that couples engaged in negative, aggressive, and withdrawing responses are more likely to see their marriage as dissatisfying. In his turn, Cramer (2002) reported that there was a very strong negative correlation between relationship satisfaction and no resolution of the conflict and less negative association with negative handling and avoidance.

Whereas the research mentioned above was concerned with conflict and its impact in relation to individuals involved in the conflict, the focus of some research is the influence on third parties (Doucet & Aseltine, 2003; Kitzmann & Cohen, 2003; Krishnakumar *et al.*, 2003). For example, Krishnakumar *et al.* (2003) found that interparental conflict is positively associated with youth problem behaviors, as well as higher levels of parent-youth conflict. Similarly, the results of Kitzmann and Cohen's (2003) study indicates that children's perceptions of interparental conflict, specifically its quality, has a great impact on their friendship quality. Children's perceptions of their parents' conflicts as poorly resolved were associated with their own problems with managing friends' conflict. Another outcome of this was that these children view their friendship as less intimate and helpful.

The review of the mainstream IC research on conflict shows that the studies are conducted in the tradition of the positivist approach to communication that treats individuals engaged in the process of interaction as autonomous actors (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996) who possess *attributes, motivations, cognitive schemata, traits, and the like* (Lannamann, 1992, p. 140). This body of work puts a person in the center of inquiry, focuses on individuals' perceived recollections of communicative acts and strategies in response to researchers' questions, and, as Goldsmith and Baxter (1996) state, *tends to ignore that speakers' acts arise and take shape in the context of jointly enacted and mutually recognized activities* (p. 88). They treat relationships as something static and rigid. However, the relationships are a dynamic phenomenon that is communicatively enacted, that is, *through talking and acting in ways that are recognizably bound with relationship categories, participants both achieve and renew the character of their relationships* (Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005, p. 153).

Not only do the researchers abstract the categories under study from the specific context of interaction but they also focus on the perception of those categories (e.g., the perception of interparental conflict), which brings the phenomena to another level of abstraction, moves them even further away from the real communication, and shifts *attention away from the dialogical nature of research* (Lannamann, 1992, p. 142) to a greater degree.

Although there is no doubt that this body of work is valid in investigating people's recalled perceptions of their conflict and enriches our knowledge of conflict, the employment of a constitutive view to studying interaction phenomena with an emphasis on the context provides a deeper insight into the problem under study. In order to manage disagreement effectively and resolve conflict, it is not enough to have an idea of what conflict is but it is necessary to know its mechanism and how it works, which is a concern of LSI researchers.

The research on conflict from the LSI perspective has different theoretical foundations in comparison with the mainstream approach. It is based on theories of linguistic pragmatics (e.g., speech act theory, Grice's cooperation principle and idea of conversational implicature), Goffman's work, ethnomethodology, theoretical assumptions of ethnography and conversation analysis (Austin, 1962/1975; Drew, 2005; Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1967, 1972, 1973, 1983; Grice, 1975/1991; Heritage, 1984; Hymes, 1989; Jacobs, 1994; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2005; Levinson, 1983/2005; Philipsen & Coutu, 2005; Sacks, 1984, 1987; Scheff, 1990; Schegloff, 1987, 1990, 1995; Searle, 1962, 1969). Although the LSI area itself is quite diverse, there are principles that are common to scholars across the field. These main principles that guide researchers in their attempt to understand conflict are that interaction is orderly; it has its norms and rules; social organization and intersubjectivity are emergent; people perform actions and construct social reality through talk; actions are joint achievements; and meaning is contextualized.

One of the theories to explain conflict is suggested by Retzinger (1991) who based her dynamic model of conflict on discourse analysis of marital quarrels. The main premises of the theory are that communication is central to understanding conflict and that nonverbal codes are of the same, if not greater, importance as a verbal part of communication process. As Retzinger points out, conflict may escalate over very trivial topics due to the manner in which the issues were communicated. The researcher stresses the importance of emotions such as shame and anger and the ideas of the social bond in understanding conflict. According to Retzinger, conflict stems from threats to the

social bond, the foundations for which include *the social self, level of differentiation (regulation of separateness and togetherness), and the emotional system* (p. 25). The dynamic model of conflict developed by Retzinger suggests that conflict develops in the following way. First, social bonds get threatened, which can be done in various ways such as demeaning criticism, contempt, unrequited love, blame, and loss of face. When this happens, a person feels shame. In case she or he does not acknowledge shame, it is likely to cause anger that may be expressed, for example, in blame, insult, hostile criticism, or withdrawal. All this, in its turn, leads to further separation, shame, and anger, and consequently, to the escalation of conflict.

Another way to explain the emergence of conflict is to look at the structural organization of talk. One of the important features of talk is its coherence (Jacobs, 1994; Sacks, 1987; Schegloff, 1990). According to Schegloff (1990), *the successive contributions of the participants are understood to be orderly in their mutual relationship, in diverse forms of orderliness* (p. 51), and this conversational coherence is provided by the sequence structure of talk. The basic unit of this structure is *the adjacency pair* that consists of two turns adjacently placed and conditionally relevant (e.g., action sequences 'question-answer', 'offer-acceptance/refusal'). This minimal unit can be expanded through additional turns that may occur before the sequence unit (*pre-expansion*), between the parts of the sequence (*insert expansion*), and after it (*post-expansion*) (Schegloff, 1995). The disruption of orderly progression of the sequence can result in conflict. For example, studying trouble-telling, Jefferson and Lee (1992) found that if advice occurred very early in troubles-telling sequences, it was likely to be resisted and was predictive of emergent conflict.

Another thing that can lead to a conflict situation is when dispreferred turns, that is, utterances that are not in agreement with a first-pair part (i.e., an utterance initiating exchange), are produced. To avoid this, participants shape this type of turns in a different way, if to compare with preferred ones. When interactants are going to produce a preferred turn, they usually do it without delay. Moreover, these turns tend to have a rather simple structure. However, if interactants feel that their response will not align with a first-pair part, for example, when they are expected to agree with assessments, they will produce different delays such as "no talk", requests for clarification, partial repeats, thus giving a chance to the initiator to modify their prior turn (Jefferson & Lee, 1992; Sacks, 1987). Besides, these turns are usually structurally complex and include an account. This preference for agreement oriented by the initiator of an exchange and a respondent *can operate to avoid a disagreement* (Sacks, 1987, p. 65) and conflict in general.

Among other issues of interest to researchers in terms of interaction organization is the role of the sequential organization of the talk in managing disagreement (Dersley & Wootton, 2000; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990; Holt, 2012) and closing conflict exchanges (Hutchby, 1996; Vuchinich, 1990). For example, such actions as complaints about one's conduct have a great potential for conflict escalation as they evoke the moral order and present the other party in an unfavorable light. Studying complaint sequences within antagonistic arguments, Dersley and Wootton (2000) point out that some types of the complainer's actions in the third position (i.e., those that are designed sarcastically or ignore the complainees' preceding action) lead to more acrimony than others. Holt (2012), in her turn, finds out that laughter produced by a recipient of a complaint in the fourth position can serve as a device to discourage the development of the complaint and to avoid further disagreement when the recipient's prior disaffiliative response was not

enough to stop the complaint sequence, as this response falls between affiliation and disaffiliation. On the one hand, it produces a minimal response to the prior turn, thus maintaining social solidarity, but at the same time disengages from the projected activity. In terms of conflict termination, Vuchinich (1990) identifies five conflict closings, namely, submission, dominant third-party intervention, compromise, stand-off, and withdrawal. Hutchby (1996) distinguishes two ways to terminate conflict episodes on the radio. The first one includes the acknowledgement and then an address to the audience or to a next caller. In the second format the acknowledgement is preceded by an assertion of a speaker's opinion.

Taking into consideration the role of micro context in conflict, Hutchby (1996) introduces the Action-Opposition model of an argumentative exchange. According to this model, an oppositional move is the primary element in an argument, as it *subsequently formulates the prior action as an arguable* (p. 23). The scholar shows how the position of interactants in argument sequences in the course of call-in radio talk is important in terms of who controls argument as first and second positions provide different resources. A disputant who gets a second position is considered to be more powerful. Maoz and Ellis's (2001) findings of the interactants' use of questions in arguments in Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian encounter groups support Hutchby's idea. Whereas in these contexts interactants employ this strategy to challenge interactants and to create an argument, in the educational consulting setting the use of this action-opposition sequence serves an opposite function in producing advice. This strategy gives a counselor an opportunity to gain information from an advice-seeker by letting him/her expand on their position while showing its shortcomings and creating the need for advice, thus avoiding disagreement and resistance to the counselor's recommendations (Vehvilainen, 2001).

Another approach to explaining the emergence of conflict is considering the existence of *disagreement space* developed in the framework of the dialogic view on argumentation. Originally, the concept of disagreement space was introduced as an attempt to link the normative argumentation (Eemeren *et al.*, 1996; Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2001) and the conversational argument (Jackson & Jacobs, 1980, 1981; Jacobs & Jackson, 1989, 1992), and was tightly connected with ideas of speech act theory. Disagreement space is understood a set of commitments, beliefs, intentions of the speaker that can be reconstructed from his actions and "called out" by another participant (Jackson, 1992), thus, providing opportunities for argument. According to Eemeren *et al.* (1993), the emergence of disagreement is not necessarily related to the truth of propositions but felicity conditions for an arguable speech act. For example, in the performance of the act of criticism, the protagonist's credibility and qualifications can be "called out" (Eemeren *et al.*, 1993).

The same idea is expressed by a number of researchers, although they do not employ the concept of disagreement space as such and the speech act theory perspective. For example, Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) emphasize that not only the contents can be challenged *but also the general competence of someone who would produce such talk* (p. 210), or, in the case of a demand, the speaker's position to perform this act can be questioned (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990). Hutchby (1996), in his turn, points out that even nonargumentative actions, for example, the mispronunciation of a word can become arguable. Analyzing radio talk, Hutchby shows how arguments emerge locally there out of callers' opening statements.

As conflict itself, the disagreement space is viewed as an interactional accomplishment. Whereas the speaker producing one or another speech act creates, deliberately or

unintentionally, a large set of possibilities for disagreement space to emerge, it is, in fact, the receiver who chooses what gets arguable (Eemeren *et al.*, 1993; Hutchby, 1996).

Taking into consideration that conversationalists work together to create and resolve conflict using different resources available to them in a 'disagreement space', researchers are interested in how they do it in practical contexts, what kind of these resources they use and, in particular, the techniques that allow them to establish control in a conflict situation (Aakhus, 2003; Aakhus & Vasilyeva, 2008; Coulter, 1990; Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2001; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990; Hutchby, 1996; Vasilyeva, 2012a, 2012b, 2015). Thus, Aakhus (2003) analyzes how mediators try to manage impasse by using linguistic devices to redirect the focus of discussion, to temporize the dispute, and to relativize facts. In strategic maneuvering (Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2001), the disagreement space is associated with the topical potential, from which arguers strategically select issues to discuss. Studying how participants of multiparty deliberation manage disagreement space, Aakhus and Vasilyeva (2008) found that disagreement is expanded through sub-dialogues over different aspects of the opening speech of the meeting related to making a proposal. This expansion was managed in three ways. First of all, the participants oriented toward the opening speech as a proposal and raised their doubts and disagreements on what was said in that speech. Second, the community members did not frame the interaction as making and entertaining a proposal. Finally, during the meeting the opening speech was re-framed as an incomplete proposal. The way the participants shaped their interactivity allowed them to have a discussion over a proposal without commitments and obligations that come with it. In his turn, Hutchby (1996) is concerned with the strategies hosts of radio talks employ to control the argument. They can use *validity challenge*, that is, utterances which oppose a claim on the grounds of its relevance to the matter in question (p. 51); *formulating*, that is summarizing, glossing, or developing the gist of an informant's earlier statements (Heritage, 1984); *reining back*, a particular form of interruption that restrain the development of callers' line of argument; and *turning the tables*. For example, Host's moves (lines 8, 9, and 10) in the following exchange (Hutchby, 1990, p. 51) illustrate validity challenge:

(1)

6	Caller:	.hh But I expect to get a lot mo:re.	
7	Host:	So?	
8	Caller:	.h Now the point is there is a limi	[t to ()
9	Host:		[What's that got
10		to do- what's that got to do with	telethons though.

Disagreement space can also be shaped by advancing institutionally appropriate topics, dialogue activities, identities and discouraging inappropriate ones (Vasilyeva, 2012a, 2012b, 2015). For example, in dispute mediation mediators treat dialogue activities of clarifying, information seeking, recommendation giving, and negotiation as institutionally preferred ones as they contribute to the goal of the mediation session (e.g.,

working out an agreement). At the same time they curtail the dialogue activity of having-an-argument as it is likely to escalate conflict (Vasilyeva, 2012b).

One more way to explain conflict and how participants manage it is to take into account a broader context (see, e.g., Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990; Eder, 1990; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001). Kyratzis and Guo's (2001) research on discursive conflict strategies used by American and Chinese boys and girls to manage conflict found contextual complexity in the use of these strategies. Thus, the employment of strategies can vary depending on whether children are involved in cross-sex or same-sex interactions. According to the researchers, American girls may use more assertive strategies communicating with boys than when they are engaged in dispute in an all-girl group. On the contrary, Chinese girls who usually practice more assertive strategies in same-sex interactions, may concede to boys in technical matters. For example, American girls employ reframing, "yes, but" statements, questions, and collaborative connectives to mitigate their opposition in their interactions with other girls (e.g., the use of the question *why* in response to the statement *I'll rub the other kitty's back* (p. 54) is a mitigated form of protest). By contrast, in cross-sex interactions, courtship-like situations in particular, American girls express opposition in a more aggravated way (i.e., employing negative polarity markers and aggravated commands). For instance, the following excerpt from Kyratzis and Guo's example (2001, p. 66) illustrates the use of a negative polarity marker in line 12:

(2)

9	Jenny:	<i>I feel</i>	<i>[something too?]</i>
10	Rob:		<i>[it only] happens to dogs, please? Jenny,</i>
11		<i>can</i>	<i>you only have it happen to dogs?</i>
12	Jenny:	<i>no 'cause</i>	<i>I found this first.</i>

Kyratzis and Guo (2001) also question the universalism of sex-gender differences approaches to conflict. For example, the researchers found that in same-sex interactions Chinese girls and U.S. boys used more direct conflict strategies, whereas Chinese boys and U.S. girls tended to apply indirect ones. In their micro-ethnographic study of the nature and functions of disputes between children in American and Italian cultures, Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) also found differences in the way they dispute. For example, Italian children produced a higher proportion of dispute routines and claim disputes and put a greater emphasis on style than American children. Some stylistic features of disputes Corsaro and Rizzo note are pre-disagreements, interruption devices, and emphasis markers. For instance, according to the researchers the following oppositional move consists of the pre-disagreement "Ma" and a question with an implicit claim (p. 52):

(3)

1	E:	<i>Ma perche doviam fare tutte le cosec he fai te Dante?</i>
		<i>(But why do we always have to do what you do, Dante?)</i>

The researchers attributed it to the fact that disputes are a central feature of Italian children's culture. For them, the main point is not winning an argument but doing it, participating in this activity. Thus, gender differences in conflict strategies and conflict in general are viewed as culture specific.

LSI scholars do not necessarily treat conflict as an "evil", a destructing force. According to them, conflict can be a signal of a threatened social bond that needs fixing (Retzinger, 1991); a source of creativity and learning (Gillispie & Chrispeels, 2008; Schon & Rein, 1994; Vehvilainen, 2001), development of different communication skills (Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990), and a necessary feature of ordinary democracy (Tracy, 2010). In this respect, Tracy (2010) introduces the concept of reasonable hostility, that is, *a norm of communicative conduct that seeks to honor the importance of respectful talk as it simultaneously legitimizes the expression of outrage and criticism* (pp. 202 - 203). Tracy identifies three features that distinguish reasonable hostility from other kinds of hostility, namely, it is a communicative action that is performed in response to another interactant's wrong or personal attack; this action is usually mitigated to attend to this interactant's face (e.g., by apologies, forms of address, minimization of imposition, and so on); and it is a *situated, socially rooted standard of judgment* (p. 206), the application of which depends on a particular context.

On the whole, all the approaches within the area of LSI, although they differ in some aspects, complement each other and add pieces to the mosaic of our knowledge of conflict practices. The advantages of the LSI perspective on conflict are the understanding of the fact that conflict cannot be abstracted from communication, the view of this communicative phenomenon as a collaborative and rule-governed activity, and the emphasis on the practices through which conflict gets constructed and managed.

In sum, in this section I have regarded only a part of what scholars in both approaches do to understand conflict but even this small portion of theoretical and empirical studies shows that these approaches take a different stance on how to explain it.

5. Conclusion

Although the positivist perspective on conflict, and communication in general, prevails, one of the distinct features of recent research in the field of communication is the wider employment of constitutive view to studying interaction phenomena. The analysis of the mainstream IC approach and the LSI approach to studying conflict reveals a considerable difference between these two views in terms of the way they conceptualize, operationalize, and explain this communication process. There is no doubt that research in both traditions has their merits and helps us to understand conflict, although in different ways. Whereas the mainstream IC approach provides us with knowledge of conflict mostly from the psychological viewpoint and gives us an idea how interactants perceive conflict and what individual factors can influence its development, the research from the LSI perspective provides insight about actual communicative behavior and shows how interactants construct the context for conflict through talk. Also, focusing on actual practices rather than people's perceptions and recollections of conflict, it illustrates what is relevant in the course of interaction and what is not. What is more, the fact that conflict practices are reproducible provides evidence to support the claim that there is orderliness in interaction. In this respect, the research in LSI contributes to the

understanding of communication as it is and not the abstraction of it, which should be the primary goal of the field, and to developing communication as a science.

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NOTES

1. A discourse intrinsic view of context advocated by conversation analysis implies that talk shapes context. Utterances and actions are both *context shaped* and *context renewing*, that is, each utterance and action can be understood only by reference to prior talk and at the same time they serve as context for the next utterance and action (Drew & Heritage, 1992).
2. According to Kyratzis and Guo (2001), mollifying statements *highlight what a participant is getting rather than what she is not* (p. 55).

ABSTRACTS

The article compares and contrasts a mainstream Interpersonal-Communication approach with a Language-and-Social-Interaction approach to studying conflict. It focuses on how these two approaches conceptualize, operationalize, and explain conflict, and how they help us to understand better this phenomenon.

L'article compare et met en contraste l'approche de la communication interpersonnelle avec l'approche du langage et de l'interaction sociale dans le cadre de l'étude des conflits. Il décrit la façon dont ces deux approches conceptualisent, opérationnalisent et expliquent les conflits, et comment elles nous aident à mieux comprendre ce phénomène. L'exploration des recherches dans le domaine de la communication interpersonnelle sur les conflits montre que les études sont menées dans la tradition de l'approche positiviste de la communication. Les études traitent habituellement du conflit comme d'un processus abstrait et indépendant du contexte. Elles traitent également les individus engagés dans le processus d'interaction comme des acteurs autonomes. Ces études mettent, en outre, l'accent sur le rôle des participants et de leurs caractéristiques plutôt que sur l'interaction elle-même. Une telle approche met une personne au

centre d'une enquête et se concentre sur ses souvenirs et perceptions des actes et des stratégies de communication en réponse aux questions des chercheurs. Les chercheurs sur le langage et l'interaction sociale se concentrent sur les conversations conflictuelles et les conflits dans la conversation. Ils considèrent, en effet, le conflit comme étant une activité interactionnelle émergente qui est produite en collaboration et qui implique l'opposition et dépend du contexte. Une autre différence entre les deux points de vue est que, bien que l'approche de la communication interpersonnelle se concentre uniquement sur les conflits entre les participants, l'approche du langage et de l'interaction sociale, en particulier l'analyse de la conversation, est également intéressée par les conflits au sein de l'organisation sociale de l'interaction. Cette approche s'intéresse aux conflits entre les différents systèmes de contraintes qui sont inhérents à la parole, par exemple, les préférences contradictoires. La recherche dans cette perspective donne un aperçu sur le comportement communicatif réel et montre comment les interactants construisent le contexte de conflit par le biais du langage. En outre, en se concentrant sur les pratiques réelles plutôt que sur les perceptions des gens et les souvenirs du conflit, il est possible d'illustrer ce qui est pertinent dans le cadre de l'interaction et ce qui ne l'est pas. Qui plus est, le fait que les pratiques de conflits soient reproductibles fournit des preuves pour étayer le postulat qu'il y a un ordre en interaction. À cet égard, cette recherche contribue à la compréhension de la communication telle qu'elle est et non pas à la façon dont chacun pense qu'elle est.

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Mots-clés: conflit, discours, communication interpersonnelle, langue, interaction sociale

Keywords: conflict, discourse, interpersonal communication, language, social interaction

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