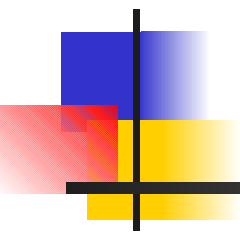


Economy strategies in English and Polish text messages as examples of channel constraints



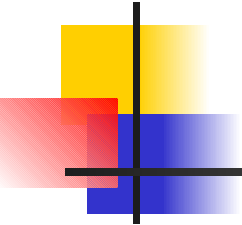
Małgorzata Kul

kgosia@ifa.amu.edu.pl

Dafydd Gibbon

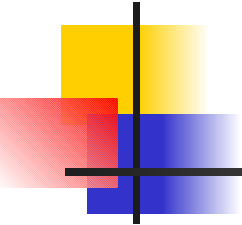
gibbon@uni-bielefeld.de

Poznan Linguistic Meeting, 20-22 April 2006



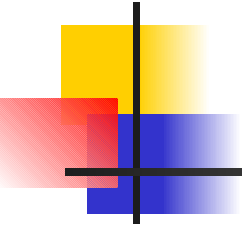
Outline

1. Introduction: texts are strange
2. Questions, hypothesis, method
3. Functional models: Grice, Jakobson
4. SMS text channel constraints
5. Similarly constrained channels
6. Short-wave radio; the case of “SOS”
7. Polish economy strategies
8. Conclusions and outlook



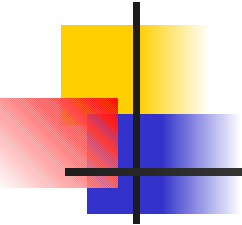
Introduction: texts are strange

- What are we talking about?
 - Semantic change: “text” = “SMS text”
 - “SMS” = “Short Message Service”
 - Why “text”? In contrast to “voice”.
 - E.g.: HiWrIsYrCar?Wnt2goCntWait4u:(cul
 - HiWrIsYrCar? **Hi, where is your car?**
 - Wnt2go **(I) want to go.**
 - CntWait4u **(I) can't wait for you.**
 - :(**I am disappointed.**
 - cul **See you later.**



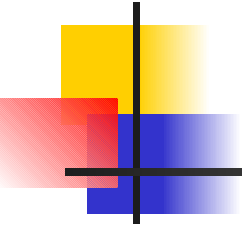
Questions

- Why are SMS texts strange?
- Which generalisations can be made?
- How can SMS coding be categorised?
- Are the differences unique to texts?
- Do other strange genres/registers (chat, email, short-wave radio) relate to texts?
- What is the significance of SMS properties for Functional and Natural Linguistics?



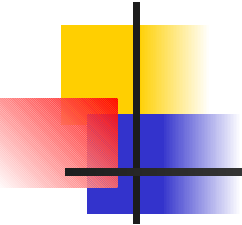
Hypothesis and method

- Coding constraints on SMS messages
 - Channel: constraints on text input, size, output
 - Language typology: orthography, syntax
- Domain and method:
 - Polish SMS texts
 - corpus based
 - comparison with related genres/registers
 - reference to previous work (Kul, López Rúa)
 - semiotic, functional approach



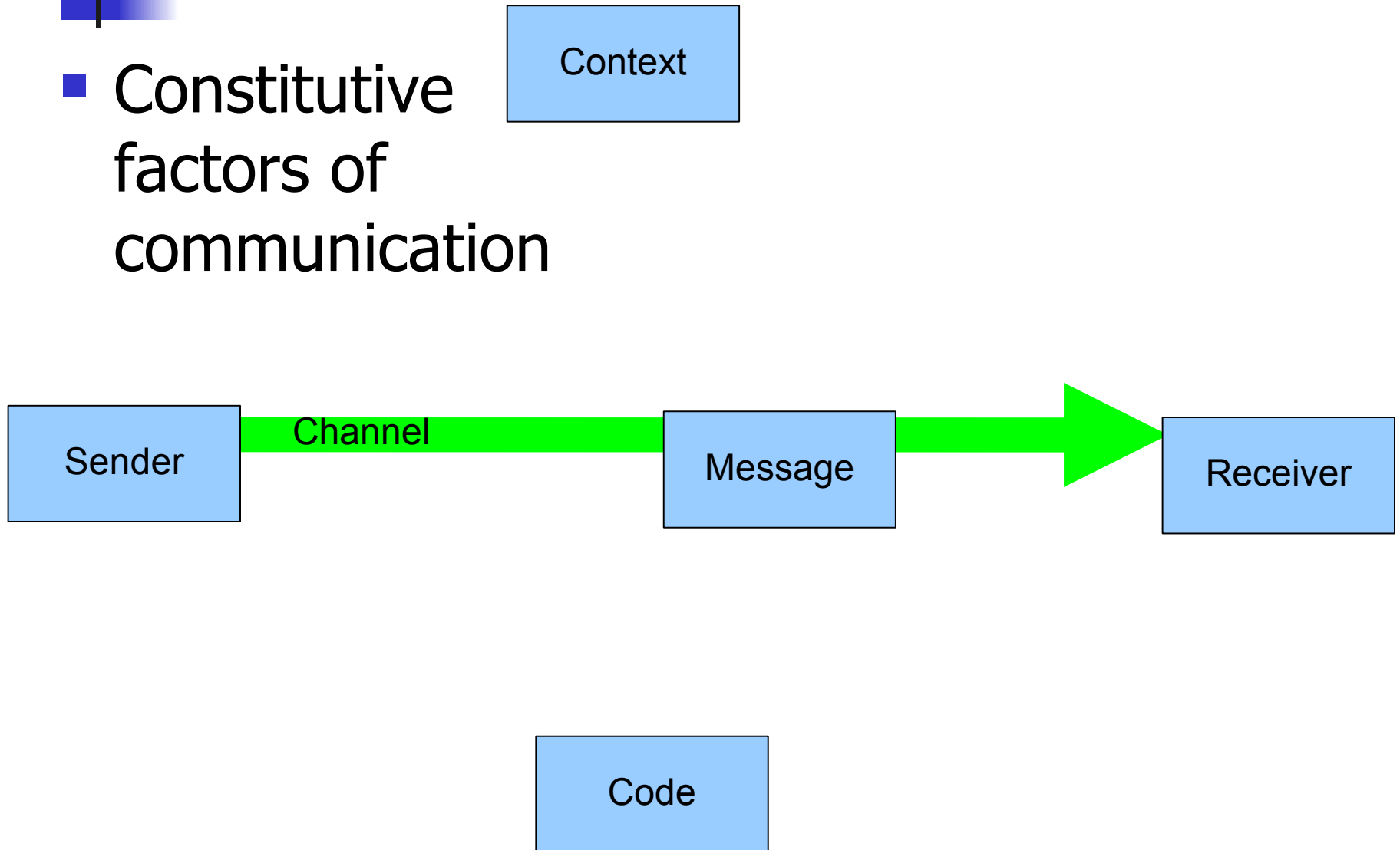
A functional model: Grice

- Grice's Conversational Maxims of Manner:
 - **Avoid obscurity of expression.**
 - **Avoid ambiguity.**
 - ***Be brief (avoid unnecessary wordiness).***
 - Be orderly.
- The Maxims define a coding conflict, briefly:
 - Clarity (explicitness etc.) vs. Economy
 - Pragmatic analogues to fortition vs. lenition
- Our concern: *economy strategies*



A functional model: Jakobson

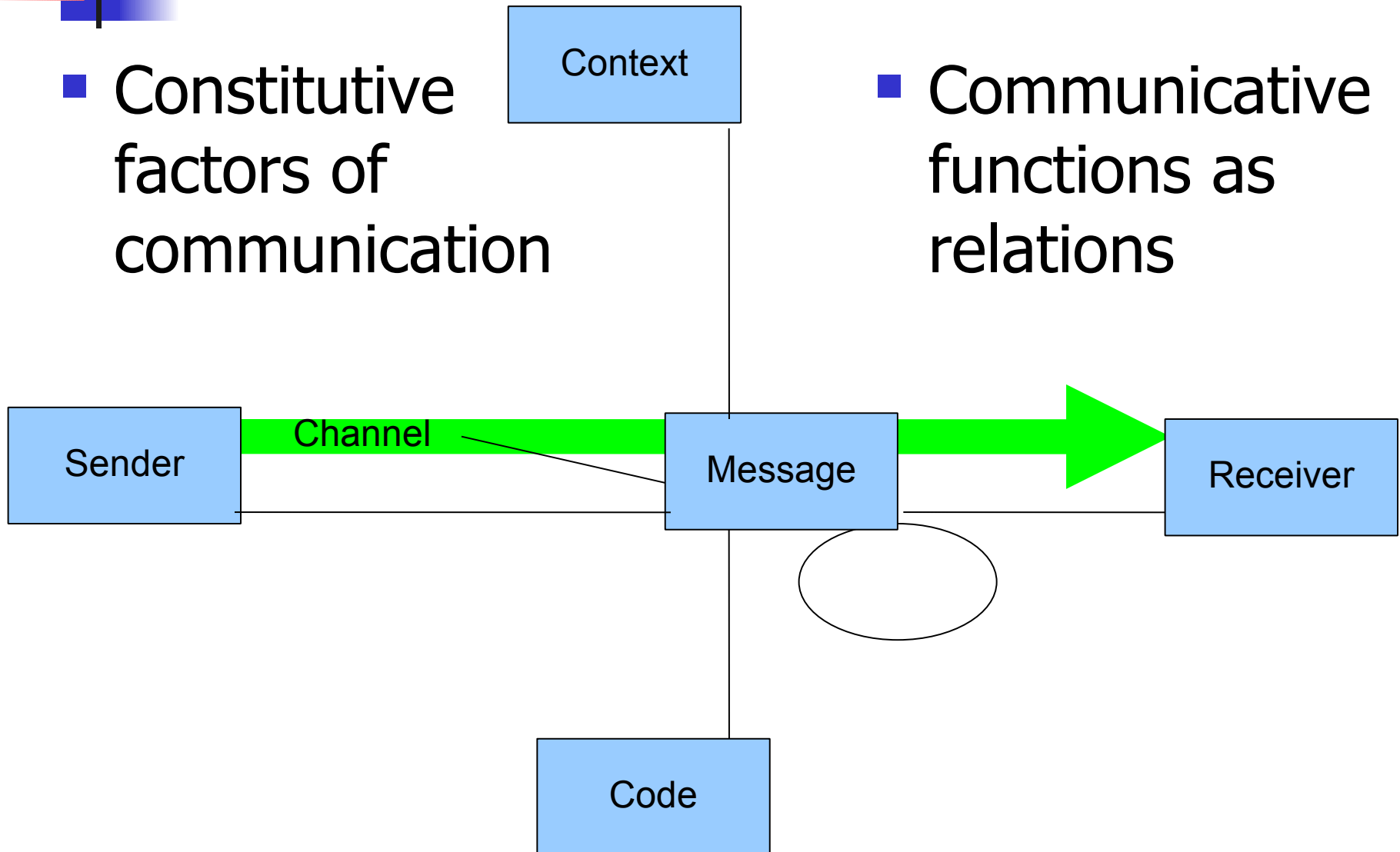
- Constitutive factors of communication



A functional model: Jakobson

- Constitutive factors of communication

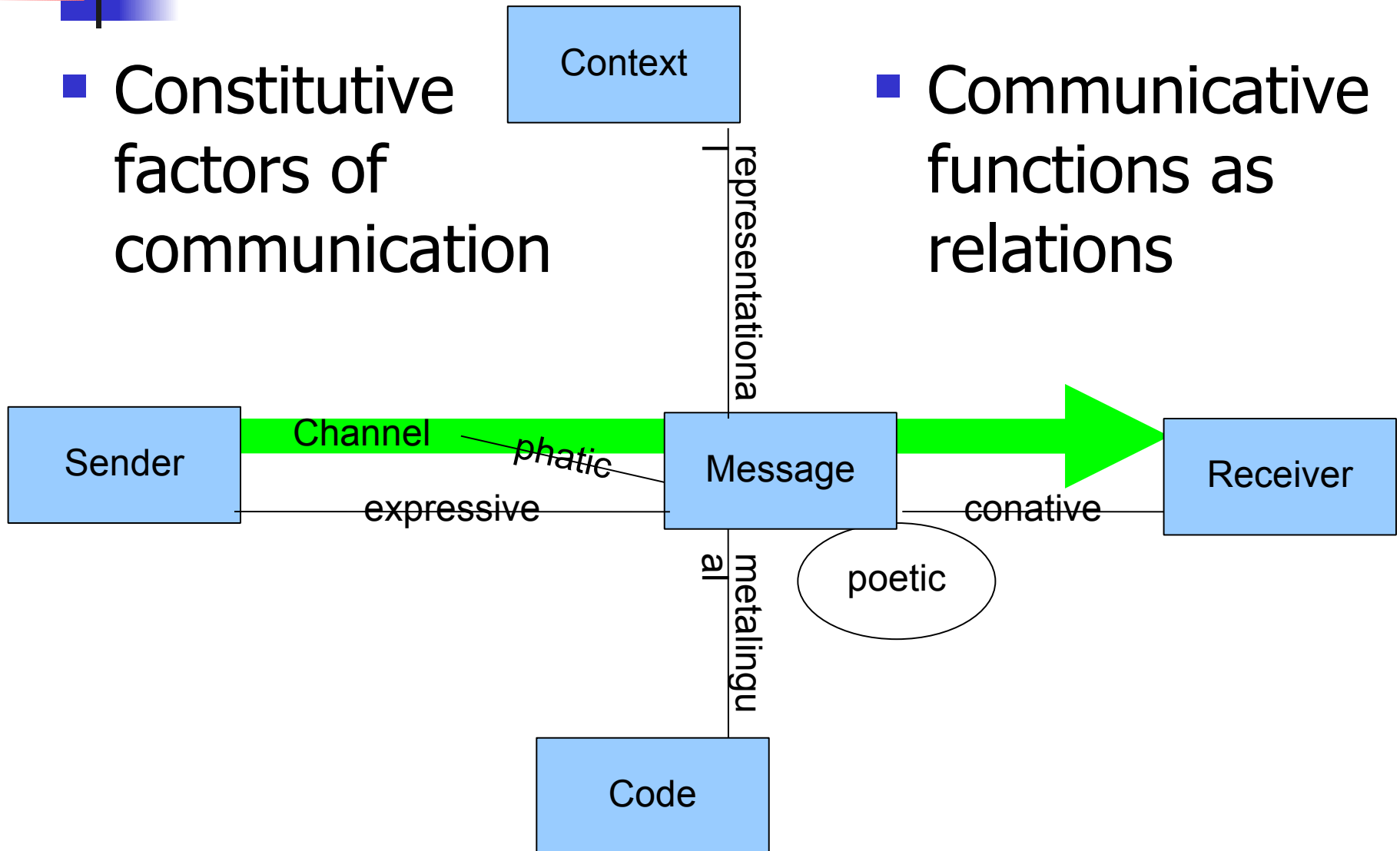
- Communicative functions as relations



A functional model: Jakobson

- Constitutive factors of communication

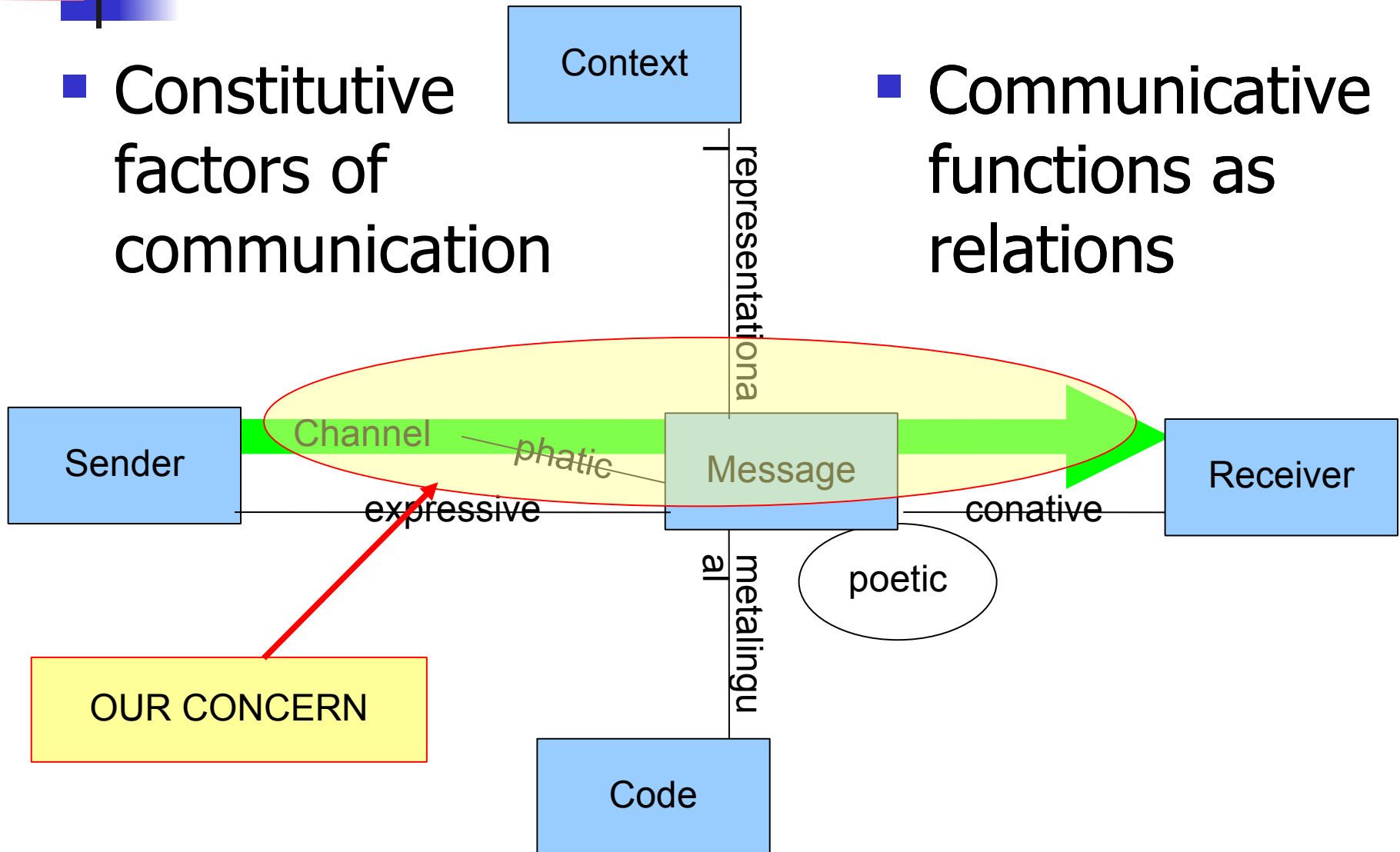
- Communicative functions as relations

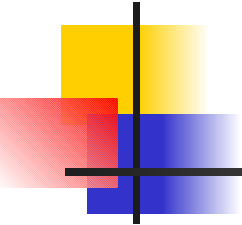


A functional model: Jakobson

- Constitutive factors of communication

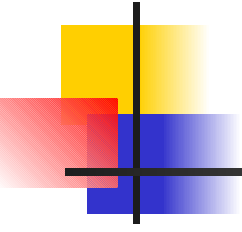
- Communicative functions as relations





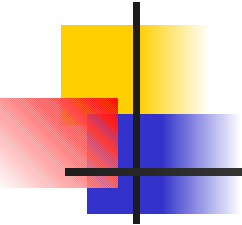
SMS text channel constraints

- Simplex visual technical text channel
- Message chunks: ≤ 160 ASCII characters
- Input: alphanumeric telephone touchpad
- Output: small screen, typically:
 - chars per line: approx 16
 - line count: 4 or 5 lines
 - chars/screen: ≤ 60
 - device-specific
 - depends on formatting: char size, line-breaks, ...



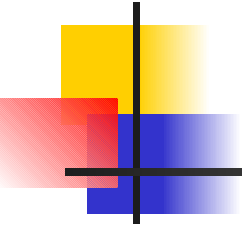
Similarly constrained channels

- Traditional:
 - semaphore
 - morse code
 - teletype
 - telegrams
- Modern:
 - email (“Unskilled Typist Constraint!”)
 - chat
 - bulletin boards, blogs



Precursor: short-wave radio

- cq “seek you” as general call (cf. ICQ)
- de “from”
- hi “laughter”
- ur “your”
- pse “please”
- vy “very”
- Q-groups:
 - qrl “location”
 - qrm “interference”
 - qrp “low power”
 - qsl “confirmation”
 - qam “weather”
- Truncation:
 - tx “transmitter”
 - wx “weather”



Special case: "SOS"

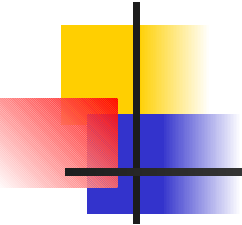
- Many theories:
 - "save our souls" ?
- Actually, just a convenient and distinctive morse code sequence: "s" + "o" + "s"

■ ■ ■ ■■■ ■■■ ■■■ ■ ■ ■

- "SMS" is sometimes used as a ring-tone:

■ ■ ■ ■■■ ■■■ ■ ■ ■

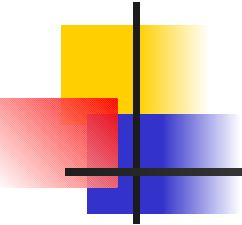
(maybe an obscure joke by a radio ham)



Special case: “SOS”

- Many theories:
 - “save our souls” ?
- Actually, just a convenient and distinctive morse code sequence: “s” + “o” + “s”

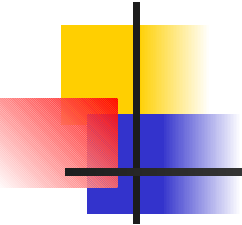
■ ■ ■ ■■■ ■■■ ■■■ ■ ■ ■



Example of SMS coding devices

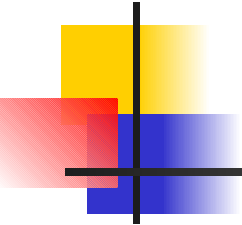
My smmer hols wr CWOT. B4, we usd 2go2 NY 2C my bro, his GF&thr 3 :-@ kds FTF. ILNY, it's a gr8 plc

- *full words:* *My, we, it's, a*
- *truncation:* *bro*
- *initialisation:* *CWOT, ILNY*
- *vowel deletion:* *wr, usd, kds, plc*
- *alphanumeric homophony:* *B4, 2C, 2, 8*
- *logographic ASCII emoticon:* *:-@*



Previous work: López Rúa

- SMS texts in English, Spanish, French:
 - Shortening devices: abbreviation (incl. idioms), clipping, initialisation (preferred in English – lack of inflection)
 - phonetic respellings: (preferred in English and French - complex sound-spelling rules)
 - Removal of diacritics, reduction to basic ASCII (preferred in Spanish and French)
 - alphanumeric homophony (preferred in English - frequent monosyllables)
- So how about Polish?



Polish economy strategies

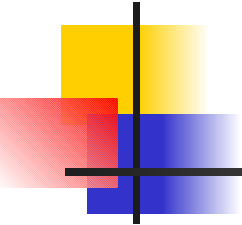
Omission of punctuation *Jakby drzwi od klatki byly zamkniete to pusc strzalke bo nie mamy domofonu*

Lower case for upper case in proper names *Gdzie dostales ladefogeda*

Lac of inter-word spaces, word-initial upper case
Hey!CouMnie?zDominikiemGodzimySie(tymRazemOnZerwalBoNiePosluchalamGoIspalamUkolagiAleInnejMozliwosciNieMialamBoZalezaloMiByGdzisPojscINieZdazylamNaAutobusWzgDoKlenicy)jeszczeNiePracujeNaStaleIjestemWMCHOD

Emoticons :p, :D, :(, :), :-)

Onomatopoeic expressions *ehhh, buhaha, blabla, auuu, hehe, hihi, aaaa, ups, grr*



Polish economy strategies

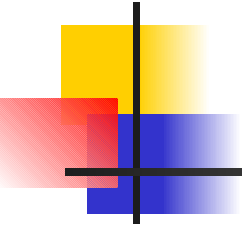
Replacement of the Polish characters by ASCII *coz*

'cóz' (well), palic 'palić' (to some), w ciagu 'w ciagu' (during), sie 'się' (itself), spoznie 'spóźnię' (I'll be late)

Borrowings *h 'godzina' (hour), asap 'najszybciej jak można' (as soon as possible), gut news 'dobre wiadomości', happy new year 'szczęśliwego Nowego Roku', see you 'do zobaczenia', nxt 'następna', 4 all 'dla wszystkich', sat 'sobota', sun 'niedziela', bany 'pociągi' (trains), new 'nowy'*

Number homophones *3maj sie, 3m sie 'trzymaj się' (take care)*

Letter homophones *S, ska 'eska' (text message)*



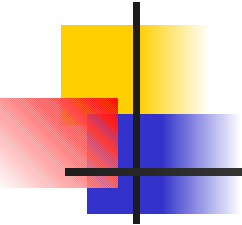
Polish economy strategies

Letter reduction *pzdr* `pozdrawienia', *kwrtlnch* `kwartalnych'

Phonetic respelling *lawju* `kocham cię' (I love you), *fak* `kurwa' (fuck), *gut najt* `dobranoc' (good night), *spicz* `wystąpienie' (speech), *slit drims* `słodkich snów' (sweet dreams)

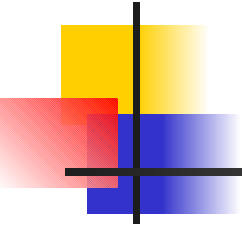
Clippings *cze* `cześć' (hello), *mam nadz* `mam nadzieję' (I hope), *syg* `sygnał' (phone signal), *cz* `czy' (if), *rozm* `rozmowa' (talk), *trza* `trzeba' (one needs to), *mo* `mocno' (strongly), *do zob* `do zobaczenia' (see you), *impra* `impreza' (party), *pasi* `pasuje' (suits) *zadzw* `zadzwoń' (to call), *spozn* `spóźnić się' (to get late), *wcz* `wczoraj' (yesterday), *czyt* `czytaliśmy' (we read), *rob* `robiliśmy' (we did)

Others *pa* `na razie, do widzenia, do zobaczenia, dobranoc' etc. (bye), *p'n'p* `Piotr i Paweł' (a local chain of supermarkets)



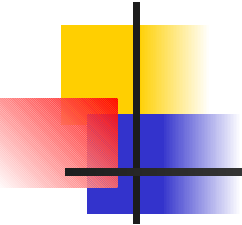
Classification of strategies

- Lexicon extension and transformation:
 - Borrowing
 - Emoticons
 - Onomatopoeia
 - “Visual lenition”:
 - Letter (esp. vowel) omission
 - clipping, truncation
 - number & letter homophony
 - Phonetic respelling
 - ASCII replacements for special characters



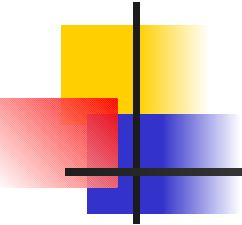
Classification of strategies

- “Visual prosody”:
 - Omission of spaces (word/sentence boundaries)
 - Omission of punctuation
 - Emoticons (cf. Intonation)



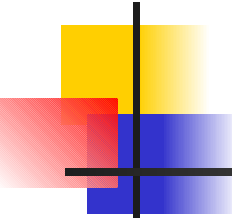
Typology and Polish SMS texts

- **Polish morphology and orthography limit the use of economy strategies**
 - complex inflection limits letter reduction
 - the existence of polysyllabic words
 - supports clippings
 - produces fewer alphanumeric homophones than English
 - one-to-one correspondence between graphs and phonemes limits phonetic respellings



Conclusions and outlook

- Channel properties (ergonomics, space) encourage economy strategies in SMS texts
- BUT: details are specific to language type, e.g..
 - morphology
 - phonology
 - orthography
- Natural/functional account:
 - economy strategies in texts
 - are visual analogues to lenition in speech



Select bibliography

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