

COMMUNICATION UNDER DISHONESTY AND TRUTHLESSNESS: A TAXONOMY OF LIES

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Abstract

In this study, components of intentional truthless and dishonest communication have been explored and analyzed. The aim of the study was to draw a taxonomy of lies. In order to achieve this, there have been explored, using the *meta-analytic research* method, the taxonomies of lies and deception and the relationship between deception and lie, using data *analysis* from research findings across studies on lie, deception and manipulation published in the last three decades; it has also been emphasized their pertaining to what is called intentional truthless and dishonest communication. A taxonomy of lies resulted from this meta-analysis: simulation, dissimulation and mystification. Finally, a grid of dissuasion regarding lies was defined by us: a grid of five justifying demands. In conclusion, there have been identified three types of lie (simulative, dissimulative and mystifying) and it has been asserted that any lie can be defused by applying the grid of five justifying demands.

It has been contended that any lie underlies insidious practices directed towards achieving certain purposes and fulfilling various interests and it represents an intentional influence, whereas a speech tinged by lie can/could either serve the immediate interests of he who lies or it can/could include the awarded and charitable lies.

It was asserted that a lie does not only destroy the fabric which forms the society, but that liars also tend to underestimate the wrong done and overestimate the good caused by their lies. In relation to a deception which some people use, the question that was raised was whether this deception was justifiable in terms of morality, honesty or dishonesty, and in terms of axiology, truthful or truthless. In this respect, it has been suggested a testing model - that is a grid, which can be considered as a dissuasion procedure, including a series of questions in a scale of five justifying demands:

a) Is there a form of alternative action which might solve the dilemma, without using a deception or a lie?

b) What axiology, ethics and morals could be invoked to excuse a deception or a lie?

c) What axiological and moral reasons could be presented as counter-arguments?

d) What could an audience consisting of reasonable individuals say about such deception or lies?

e) A fifth criterion that may be added is one that could clearly establish the difference between effectiveness of a lie and that of a truth.

It has been concluded that a part/a sequence of communication can intentionally lack honesty and truth: and this is intentional truthless and dishonest communication. The taxonomic bases or pillars of this communication are lie and deception. The lie has a prevalent innocent character whereas in deception there has been found a specialization: major financial and personal effects are always sought; deception thus represents a lie with major negative consequences. Of all three forms of lie (simulation, dissimulation, mystification), mystification has the most profound effects, representing an antechamber of deception.

Keywords: *communication, intentional truthless and dishonest communication, lie, deception*

Taxonomies of lie and deception

Lie and deception are intentional dishonest and truthless types of communication. Starting with the 1970s, there was revealed the connection between the two and there have been drawn several taxonomies of deceptive acts.

R. E. Turner, C. Edgley and G. Olmstead prove that „In everyday conversations, honesty is not always the best policy” (Turner, Edgley & Olmstead, 1975, p. 69). They argue for a taxonomy that consists of five types of deceptive acts: lies, exaggerations, half-truths, secrets, and diversionary responses. Lies are statements containing information contradicting information that would be contained in an honest statement (30% from deceptive acts). In exaggerations, the deceiver creates overstatements by giving much more information than, would normally be given in an honest intervention (5% from deceptive acts). Half-truths consist of statements in which there is omitted or concealed a part of truthful information (29% from deceptive acts). Secrets constitute instances where the deceiver remains silent when detaining relevant information to communication (3% from deceptive acts). Diversionary responses are statements without relevance to the information the deceiver would have provided in an honest discourse (33% from deceptive acts).

R. Hoper and R. A. Bell speak about forty-six deceptive acts making up six categories: fictions, playings, lies, crimes, masks, and unlies (Hoper & Bell, 1984).

S. Metts and H. Chronis draw three forms of deceptive acts: falsifications, half-truth and concealments (Metts & Chronis, 1986).

D. B. Buller and J. K. Burgoon formulate the Interpersonal Deception Theory (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; Burgoon & Buller, 2008). They observe that people lie or say the truth (”lied or told the truth”) (Burgoon & Buller, 1994). On the other hand, ”during each interaction, the security professional must decide whether the individual is being forthright or deceptive” (Meservy, Jensen, Kruse, Burgoon, Nunamaker Jr, Twitchell & Metaxas, 2005). They conceive deception as a form of ”inter-personal communication” (Buller & Burgoon, 1996). In the center of deception lie ”deceptive messages” (Buller, Burgoon, Buslig & Roiger, 1996). The mechanism of deception is reducing the veracity of information: „The most obvious way of managing information in deception is to reduce its veracity” (Buller & Burgoon, 1994, p. 200). The deception taxonomy includes three categories, as ”deception types”: ”falsification, concealment, equivocation” (Buller, Burgoon, White & Ebesu, 1994, p. 366). The lie is evaluated as a form of falsification.

Sissela Bok shows that lie is “any intentionally deceptive message which is stated” (Bok, 1989, p.13). She emphasizes that lie is part of a larger category of deception “that includes all that we do or do not do, say or do not say, with the intention of misleading others” (Bok, 2011). We can “lie” not only by verbal medium, but also by nonverbal media. People produce deception with voice, and also with “body and face” (Ekman & Friesen, 1974; Ekman, 2009). We see deception as the mechanism of lie.

Types of lie

Lie has two main subspecies: simulation and dissimulation. Simulation is a mimetic form of behaviour, by means of which the individual attitude is subordinated to getting certain advantages or achieving certain purposes by means that exceed the personal value options. This attitude is known as opportunism. Dissimulation consists in circulating certain

strictly circumstantial opinions and in dealing with certain eminently episodic attitudes, tracing on the predominant.

A truthless speech is the one that language-cognitive enterprise produced against the lucidity of the gap between what is spoken and what is thought. This speech begins at the moment when the producer becomes aware of the delimitation between truth and falseness, between the reality of the speech and the reality of things. The awareness of the difference is reinforced by hiding, dissimulating or simulating the coincidence between story and reality.

The lie underlies insidious practices of achieving certain purposes and fulfilling various interests. Any lie is an intentional influence. Gheorghe Teodorescu (Teodorescu, 2000, p. 238) distinguishes two categories where the speech of those who use the lie may be classified.

- the first category serves the immediate interests of that who lies;
- the second one includes the awarded and charitable lies.

In politics, the lie capitalises a misguidance with effects which extend beyond the event of lying. The lying subject enterprises an approach of settling off the suspicions of the individual in question, in relation to an insidious interest. This anaesthetisation of suspicion prepares an operation which would find one unwarned, so that one cannot defend one's interests, not contesting the advanced ones or offering resistance. The political lie is thus sterilised and provides as well as it goes along with the public indifference of citizens, who could build a security barrier once they are notified. "Political lie appears frequently in political programs", as Gheorghe Teodorescu shows (Teodorescu, 2000, p. 252).

For the group of interests, serious savings of means are done, which could be wasted when trying to forcibly impose a truthless will.

There are two types of public lie: tactical lie and media lie (Teodorescu, 2000, p. 240). The former consists in the premeditated dissimulation of the intentions of an individual or a group, intentions which are not known by the opponents, who thus forced to make bad decisions. Dissimulation does not only imply a tactic silence from those who machinate, but even a change in their behaviour in order not to betray through anything the actual intentions. Concerning the media lie, this implies a form of mediation in promoting the group interest. Specifically, the opponent's image is targeted, not the opponent himself. The working procedure for the removal involves the public opinion, stimulated to refuse certain opinions, attitudes, values and behaviours considered retrograde, conservatory or directed against the interests of the community (Knapp, Hart & Dennis, 1974).

Several problems arise in relation to the intentionality of lie: can the speech fully hide the intentions, what kind of intentions can be simulated, which intentions can be dissimulated, which are the simulation and dissimulation means, can others' intentions be precisely delimited, is it possible to lie in relation to others' intentions? The lies hide their intentions (Gavrilovici & Oprea, 2013). To classify the "truthless" speech as lie, it must be decoded in a double intentionality: the intention also manifests the hidden intention. A speech that would perfectly classify as secret its intentions would only present manifest intentions. Any speech that "drops" a hidden intention into decipherment and decryption is a truthless speech. More exactly, the truthless speech is the only speech unable to entirely hide its intentions. The speech without subsidiary intentions cannot be a truthless speech (Andersen, 1999; Unguru, 2010).

Generally, any intention may be simulated and dissimulated. The percentage majority of intentions animating the lies is represented by aggressive intentions. Those projects including the dissimulation of intentions surprise the opponents, decreasing their capacity to respond and bringing effort in achieving the objectives. If the dissimulation of intentions seemed natural from some perspective for the aggressive intentions, then for the pacifist intention, dissimulation would at least be surprising. This shows that man has a propensity towards dissimulation.

The aggressive intentions are simulated, dissimulated mainly on two arrays: either by adopting a seductive behaviour able to camouflage the aggressiveness of targeted purposes, or by forcing towards what is mythical, so that the effects would appear to limit only at the level of speech.

The dissimulation and simulation procedures consist in:

- a) “deliberate” omissions;
- b) inserting certain plausible arguments into the truthless speech to the extent where they counteract the suspicions in relation to the honesty of the lying subject;
- c) imitating or mimicking the appreciation for certain opinions, values, attitudes, behaviours, hiding the intention to push them into a crisis;
- d) the “masked as involuntary” delivery of certain information and secret, confidential data, giving the opponent the impression that by possessing the pieces of information and the data, they would have a tactic or strategic ascendant.

Concerning the latter procedure, it would present the attributes of intoxication, being widely used in the actions of disinformation.

The successes of persuasion do not only relate to the simulation and dissimulation of own intentions, but also to the capacity to anticipate the opponent’s intentions and approaches. If the main goal of he who wants to mislead, deceive, lie is simulation and dissimulation, the capital goal of he who wants to prevent, to counteract or neutralise the persuasive intentionality is disclosure, exposure, as forms of dissuasion.

Three of them are outlined to be dissuasive strategies of disclosing the lie (Teodorescu, 2000, p. 258):

- supervising the opponent’s actions;
- analysing the content of public acts that the opponent enterprises or performs;
- entering the universe of the opponent’s confidential projects.

Therefore, it should not be overlooked that the information needed to disclose the opponent is largely not secret or confidential.

A third form the lie is mystification. This relies directly on the confused, vague (neither true nor false) character of value. The hypocrite speech on the value is the product of lacking an authentic consideration in relation to an extolled value. The mystifying speech devalidates the adhesion to the invoked value and importance assigned to it. The values are emphasized in two ways: a) emphasising the norms is grounded on the opponent’s profile (basis for flattery and adulation as forms of seduction); b) universalising certain values which would bring all those trapped in the situation of communication to a platform-contract, to an axiological protocol.

Mystifying is covered by the glory of undermining the value by appealing to value.

The American Institute for Propaganda Analysis has elaborated a study in 1939 (*The Fine Art of Propaganda*), where it concludes that generalisations such as “everyone does this” clearly have a persuasive false intention to convey an impression. This type of persuasion is called “herd mentality”. Another type of persuasion is called “card stacking” and consists in cheating by exaggeratedly highlighting the details. The impression of openness and honesty is thus created, but such detailed information is delivered, so that key-elements are omitted. This type may be illustrated by a situation of persuasion. For the question “Are there cases of intoxication on the campus?”, the administrator answers “I have one case actually confirmed among the students”. By this, the unconfirmed cases are excluded, as well as the cases of certain professors or less young individuals. In this situation, the details are overstressed, the language is restrictive, a careful limitation is fixed under a temporal and demographic ratio.

On the other hand, as F. Deaver shows (Deaver, 2004, p. 92) there are white lies (innocent lies), by means of which obvious untruths are advanced, being justified as told for a beneficial purpose. It is accepted as innocent that lie told by a doctor hiding the severity of his patient’s final state of the illness. An innocent lie is accepted to be told by one member of a family to keep secret a surprise party from another. An innocent lie is told to a friend as compliment when purchasing new clothes. White lies are justified by the assertion that the ends justify the means (Cucos, 1997; Cucos, 2002).

There are also barefaced lies. These are defined as untruths communicated without any compensatory purpose, due to an unjustifiable desire to deceive. Their specificity consists in that they do not have justifying elements and that they cannot have subjacent purposes to deliver a more profound understanding. F. Deaver deems that barefaced lies are to be found in parables, allegories and in journalism (Deaver, 2004, p. 92) and that they “are not related to fiction”. One justification could have barefaced lies: their use to avoid a tragic outcome.

Deception is also a form of lying. Umberto Eco considers that persuasive speech excludes deception. Presided by an elevated rhetoric, persuasion takes over one of its discursive rules: argumentation to start from special probable premises, the probability of which is explanatory. “The persuasive speech tries to convince the public about the value of an idea, person or action” (Eco, 1982, p. 363). The practical incapacity to operate the distinction between manifest persuasion and deception has led the practice of rhetoric in ancient times to its multiple degenerations, widely justifying Socrates’s attack of Sophists. As Eco says, Socrates himself was a Sophist, even the greatest of those who used explicit and manifest persuasion. The threshold between honest persuasion and deception would be exactly where the premises are recognised or ignored in their partial character. When this character is dissimulated, either by deception or by weakness, it is a matter of an ideological position. Therefore, for Eco, deception would be the field of the unexplained probable premises. Authentic persuasion is manifest, meaning it provides honesty by explicating the premises. Manifest persuasion opposes the deception, the explicit premises are against implicit premises.

F. Deaver considers that deception includes the concepts of intentionality, commission and omission. It does not have a territory, it may occur anywhere. We also find it easily in the media, used by journalists and their sources, by specialists in advertising and in

relationship with the public (Deaver, 2004, p. 101). According to J.-A. Barnes's appreciation (Barnes, 1998, p. 115), the notion of deception would be wider than that of lie.

As for journalism, the sources can lie or can cause confusion in relation to whether it has or does not have a piece of information. Journalists may mislead when attempting to make the sources give that information or may pose as something they are not, in order to make the sources give in and talk. Advertising messages and public relations messages can use graphics or a language by means of which they clearly try to mislead, even if they do not lie. Deception often proves to be a useful and comfortable strategy to get the information which the journalist believes the audience needs and has the right to know. This is a tempting tool in order to persuade undecided buyers to tend towards a certain product.

As destructive force, deception makes room in most cases dishonestly and without a solid argumentation. Behind any deception there is the argumentation that the purpose which needed to be achieved through this exceeds the morality of deception. One accepts that misleading is sometimes a justified act if it is necessary in order to implement important objectives or to listen to moral rules which are above the precept "do not deceive", as well as to defend somebody's life or to protect someone from big troubles. Advertising and public relations are areas where there is always the temptation to turn the products, services and individuals, in objects to promote, and to raise them above the qualities which they actually have. Advertising companies do so as the products would look at their best on TV. It is known for example that reflectors cause the ice-cream brought on set for filming to melt before ending the spot recording. If the ice-cream were replaced with mashed potatoes, this would mean the public is deceived. Is it correct to use in the ad mashed potatoes under the semblance of ice-cream – F. Deaver wonders, who also gives another example (Deaver F., 2004, p. 102). A bowl of soup is presented to us only as a shiny surface of a liquid, because all the herbs and meat fall to the bottom of the bowl. If, as it is actually done, transparent objects were used in the bowl to bring the "meat" and "herbs" to sight, would this not be a deception? In order to advertise a toy intended for an audience consisting of children, it should be shot as a close-up or zoom in, so that the toy would appear more voluminous than it actually is. Is misleading children a deception? Will the child and parent who ordered the toy lose their trust in the manufacturing company, in the advertising industry or in toys? Is it a deception that car, drink and cosmetics brands are subtly implanted in a movie? If they reduce the costs of making the film, then advertising has done its job (Frunzã, 2013). It emerges that deception could be defined as a lie or misguidance with favourable utilitarian consequences (Cojocaru, 2005). Misleading brings advantages, this is why when its consequence is the disruption of certain social values it is incriminated by criminal law. Article 215 of the Romanian Criminal Code considers the deception as the crime consisting in misleading a person, by presenting an untruthful deed as real or a true deed as untruthful, with the purpose to obtain an illicit material for oneself or for another, also causing a damage. Deception may occur both as measurement deception (296 Romanian Criminal Code) and as deception concerning the quality of goods (297 Romanian Criminal Code). Deception is a lie with utilitarian consequences. Untrue texts vary: the news released by the source, in order to test the reactions of the audience (*trial balloon*); rumour (informal news); tendentious (distorted, deliberately incorrect) argumentation.

A grid of five justifying demands

We contend that the lie does not only destroy the fabric which forms the society, but also that liars tend to underestimate the wrong done and overestimate the good caused by their lies. The object of lying is often excused, because it is pretended to avoid a wrong by causing non-rejecting benefits within the wide limits of correctitude. These excuses can however resist only sometimes to moral criteria.

In relation to a deception which people use, we wonder whether it is justifiable in terms of morality, honesty or dishonesty, and in terms of axiology, if it is true or truthless. In this respect, we then suggest a testing model. This grid, which can be considered a dissuasion procedure, includes three questions in a scale of five justifying demands:

a) Is there a form of alternative action which would solve the dilemma, without using a deception or a lie?

b) What axiology, ethics and morals could be invoked to excuse a deception or a lie?

c) What axiological and moral reasons could be presented as counter-arguments?

d) What could an audience consisting of reasonable individuals say about such deception or lies?

e) A fifth criterion that may be added is one made available by Bertrand Russell (Russell, 1969, p. 38), showing: “At the same time, there is a difference between the effectiveness of a lie and that of a truth: the lie cannot cause the desired effect for as long as the truth”: How many hours, days or years is valid what is saying?

The conviction that emerges is that most lies shall fail to meet these justifying demands. Any lie is an already observed lie. The observer’s astonishment afterwards represents their self-flattery. The observer gets a vision of distortion and deformation within which amazement particularly aims the course of verisimilitude, which until the collapse, supported the truthless speech. Cogitation that follows the emotional explosion shall consist in inferences about the mechanism which would remotely control the course of productive thinking and which guide the ideational line of influence. The observer’s first doubt shall be the assumption that above the distortion, there could be a power which would be successful in absolute truths and could even control the lie, too (Avrigan, 2009).

According to V. Tran and A. Vasilescu (Tran & Vasilescu, 2003, p. 136), the lie would be a “technique” used in “manipulative practices” and “an intentional communicative act” (Tran & Vasilescu, 2003, p. 9). The lie is not just that. It is one of the four elementary operations falling into the mechanism generating the actions and campaigns of disinformation, propaganda, manipulation, rumour, etc. The feeling that there would be a decisive power subordinated to the rumour which resulted in lie is almost general. A rumour circulating as rumour shall thus have two powers: a power of execution, working within the speech and another, the power of control, always located outside and behind the power of discursive execution.

The power of control has the tools of premeditation, investigating the persuasive strategy. Below the surface line of speech, besides the intentionality of power of execution and power of control, there is explicitly the inertial power of the receptor’s party automatism. The inertial power which the persuasive agent counts on consists of the mechanisms of thinking: perceptions, representations, reasons, inferences, memory, set of

language inertias and social scripts (those social, cultural, socio-economic, political scenarios for which the individual has automated reactions). The inertial power is that guaranteeing the verisimilitude, meaning the appearance of truth.

Conclusion

It has been concluded that a part of communication can intentionally lack honesty and truth: and this is intentional truthless and dishonest communication. The taxonomic bases or pillars of this communication are lie and deception. The lie has a prevalent innocent character whereas in deception there has been found a specialization: major financial and personal effects are always sought; deception thus represents a lie with major negative consequences. Of all three forms of lie (simulation, dissimulation, mystification), mystification has the most profound effects, representing an antechamber of deception.

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