

**A system of replicable constraints in the age of semiotic binge:
On the complementarity of symbolic and dynamic aspects of language.**

Converging with a framework recently developed by Joanna Rączaszek-Leonardi, my contribution will address language as a system of replicable constraints (Rączaszek-Leonardi and Kelso 2008; Rączaszek-Leonardi 2009, 2013). From this perspective, linguistic symbols underdetermine the message being conveyed, while the rest of the communication is supplied by the specific frame of reference. In other words, symbols constrain the development of an interaction, rather than performing a merely representational function. As a result, their meaning is not to be found in either individual minds or objects of the external world, but rather should be seen as soft-assembling in context.

In an age of proliferation of media, when we are constantly -and, often, simultaneously- attending to multiple stimuli, I will investigate the integration of linguistic symbols and visual background in a sample of multi-modal pictures published in a worldwide known social network. Given the present approach, the expectation is that the conventional semantic value of a linguistic symbol will constrain the range of possible non-linguistic backgrounds it can be coupled to, without nevertheless being deterministic. The results show that not only is this in fact the case, but the process is bi-directional, with the non-linguistic background also constraining the choice of the linguistic symbol. While the **association** of a linguistic with a non-linguistic stimulus may seem an individual rather than social affair, this is not the case. Indeed, the publication of a post happens in the context of a social network, where communication is regulated by collective dynamics (cf. Rączaszek-Leonardi and Cowley 2012), and can trigger a wide range of potential integrations and replies.

I will thus suggest that the increasing complexity of the contexts of language use speaks in favor of the complementarity of symbolic and dynamic aspects of language advocated by Rączaszek-Leonardi. Indeed, it is possible to observe a principle of causal circularity in action (Kelso 1995): on the one hand, the sum of common traits observable in the bulk of occurrences of a symbol over time shapes its conventional semantic value, allowing the community of language users to employ it again later; on the other hand, each situated occurrence of this symbol integrates this value with contextual **information**. From this perspective, it seems possible to argue that each communicative event creates its own meaning (cf. Thelen and Smith 1994); therefore, it seems sensible to characterize linguistic symbols as constraints on the development of a specific interaction.

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