4   Seductive Communication: Paradoxical Exhibition, Obliquity and Non Verbal Synchronization

Rita CICERI

Abstract: Seductive interaction is here analyzed as a flexible plurality of behavioral patterns, corresponding to the variety of communicative intentions: exhibition, approaching the partner, deepening reciprocal knowledge, and reaching of a level of intimacy. The attention is moved from a structural analysis in which seduction is described as a timed flow of interactions characterized by different "steps", to a complementary approach which analyzes the communicative seductive behavior in each phase and shows some of the time-related dimensions, such as sequence, frequency, synchronization and simultaneity, which are required to describe seductive communication behavioral patterns. It particularly makes it possible to analyze the connections between different systems of expression (verbal and nonverbal) and to describe several seductive strategies of obliquity and to disguise tactical communication, which are defined as miscommunication forms. These communicative strategies – paradoxical exhibition, forms of discursive obliquity, the multimodal message and nonverbal synchronization - are based on the "undefined content" of the message. It is because of this that seductive communication is tantalizing, leaving much to the partner's imagination and promising her more than she has already seen. Moreover, the fact that the content is "undefined" allows the content itself to be adapted and modified to best suit the situation, thus lessening the risk of being too invasive and of being rejected. Secondly, it is shown how these strategies are carried out concentrating on the "undefined form" of the message, or rather, on the synergy between different expressive signals which make up the message.

Contents

4.1   Introduction

During the courting stage even the cockerel uses astuteness to attract the attention of the hen. To catch her attention and to entice her towards him, he shows off the food he has in his beak. This is an extremely simple sequence of actions, which has been consolidated throughout the centuries.

Courting, both in the animal world and in human interaction, involves resorting to masked exhibitionism, trickery and, more generally, a form of indirect and oblique communication.

The act of seducing is a subtle and enticing game, which requires using the right amounts of exhibition or disguise, flaunting or revealing slightly, saying something but not saying too much. This alternating between one and the other of the above plays a big part in seductive interaction in which the intention to reduce the interpersonal distance with hopes to increase intimacy is closely intertwined with the wish to save one's face in case of rejection.

It also concerns the choice of communicative behavior, which is strategically allusive: to be efficient, it must involve giving just a hint of what's on offer without revealing too much. Clarity and referential information are certainly not the distinctive features of seductive communication; in fact, what seems to count most is "how the game is played," rather than the contents of the game itself.

For these characteristics, seductive communication stands out in its own right as a point of observation in communicative behavior. Particularly it makes it possible to analyze the connections between different systems of expression (verbal and nonverbal) and to describe several strategies of obliquity and disguise techniques, which are defined as miscommunication forms.

Having defined this phenomenon which we are referring as "seduction" we hereby propose to describe some of these communicative strategies.

4.2   Seductive communication: a matter of heart or head?

The etymology of the Latin verb "seducere" (composed of *sed* "separation" and *ducere* "to lead," which in German comes out as *Ver-führung*) shows that the word has taken on various meanings throughout the course of the centuries and points out different and complementary aspects of seduction.

One negative meaning of it is "to lead astray," therefore trick the other person somehow. In literature, from the classical tragedies through to decadentism, seduction was considered to be an unstoppable force, a trap that was capable of leading one onto the wrong path. The separation of the image of the seducer, a hunter, cold and indifferent to the feelings of others, and the seduced, prey and victim of his or her own feelings, is highlighted. The former is driven by his head, the latter by his heart. Seductive communication is the place and the means, which are used to lay the snare.

Another, but quite different meaning of "seducere" is "to be led along." Here, he who is seduced is attracted and led, quite simply, "somewhere else." In terms of relationships, it is stressed that seduction *plans*, or rather, creates of suitable settings and the conditions for a more intimate encounter and the getting to know of one another. The set borders between the seducer and the seduced seemingly break down since seductive roles coexist in both partners. In romance literature and in much contemporary literature seductive communication comes under this meaning being a prelude to relationships and special

encounters, and made up of signals and evident signs of choosing. Heart over mind and conversely, or, better still, passion bound with knowing one another.

In a broader sense, nowadays the word "seduction" indicates a form of behavioral and communicative strategy. Leaving aside the connotation, which is most associated with the relationship between the two sexes, today the term "seduction" means a mixture of attitudes and devices, which is used to enable oneself to come out of anonymity and to get noticed and chosen.

In this sense seduction can be seen at work in all social spheres and contexts, from private relationships, to the public economy to politics to the media and press. Seductive communication then has much to do with creating and keeping up an image that must be suitably attractive to obtain what is desired.

Seduction could therefore be an advertisement, a picture or an electoral campaign. In other words, in what Baudrillard [1] defines as "appearance strategies," seductive communication can combine an informative capacity with the capacity of pleasure and "sensual involvement."

The "art of pleasure" requires a careful plan of behavior, which has communicative relevance, and simultaneously must be able to elicit an emotional response. If it can provoke not only an interest, but also attraction, then it can create or increase a feeling of desire or need. For this prerogative it has been defined by Umiker-Sebeok [2], and by Taylor, Hoy, and Haley [3], quite paradoxically, "cold seduction". This type of seduction, aiming itself at several people at once though making each one feel exclusive, is of a contractual nature and is played consciously and knowingly by both partners. In this last interpretation the strategic aspect of seductive behavior assumes the form of a conquering technique in which emotional involvement and interaction with the partner are not a relevant part of the game, but is the actual means to an end.

Seductive communication is a complex matter for the heart and for the mind since it is used as a planned, rational strategy and is also called into action when there is emotional involvement on behalf of the seducer. The different amount of these two components will depend on the seducer, what his aims are, how far he wants to go and how much is at stake for him. Moreover, as we'll see in the next paragraph, these components vary also depending on the actual stages of the seductive game

4.3 The bio-social models and the steps of seductive interaction

In scientific literature there have been two main approaches to analyzing seduction: the ethological-evolutionist research and the studies which examine the social and psychological dimensions. Both highlight an exchange of resources as a part of the courting ritual.

The evolutionist models highlight the reproductive function of the exchange as being largely due to sexual attraction, while the socio-psychological models point to the function of culture in establishing patterns of exchange. Heart/mind can be weighed up against instinct/reason or nature/culture.

The most recent bio-social seduction models aim to bind the biological aspect, concerning animal behavior, with the interpersonal aspect, this last with all the various influences bestowed upon it by culture.

Because of the most recent developments in psychology and intimate behavior outlined, among other scholars, by Hewes, [4], and Dindia [5], the Steps Theory of Givens [6] and the bio-social model proposed by Kendrick and Trost [7], seduction could be defined as a

strategic and intentional sequence of moves in which the primary motive is to attract (usually sexually) another person (usually of the opposite sex). The main goal of seduction is to build an intriguing bond with the partner with the aim of reaching an intimate relationship. Within this perspective, we could describe seduction as a timed flow of interactions characterized by different "steps" or unfolding phases, as it is outlined by Morris [8].

As shows figure 4.1, the starting point of the seductive process is the identification-choice of a charming partner based on attraction and interests (first step). Then the subject aims at establishing contact with the potential partner through the strategies of exhibition and of catching his/her attention (second step). The subject then tries to assess more realistically the degree of interest and attraction he feels towards the partner (third step). Finally, the seductive process develops into a phase of reciprocal approach, with the aim of establishing an intimate relationship between the partners through the progressive reduction of the uncertainty level (fourth step). The whole sequence ends with the decision to maintain a stable bond (fifth step).
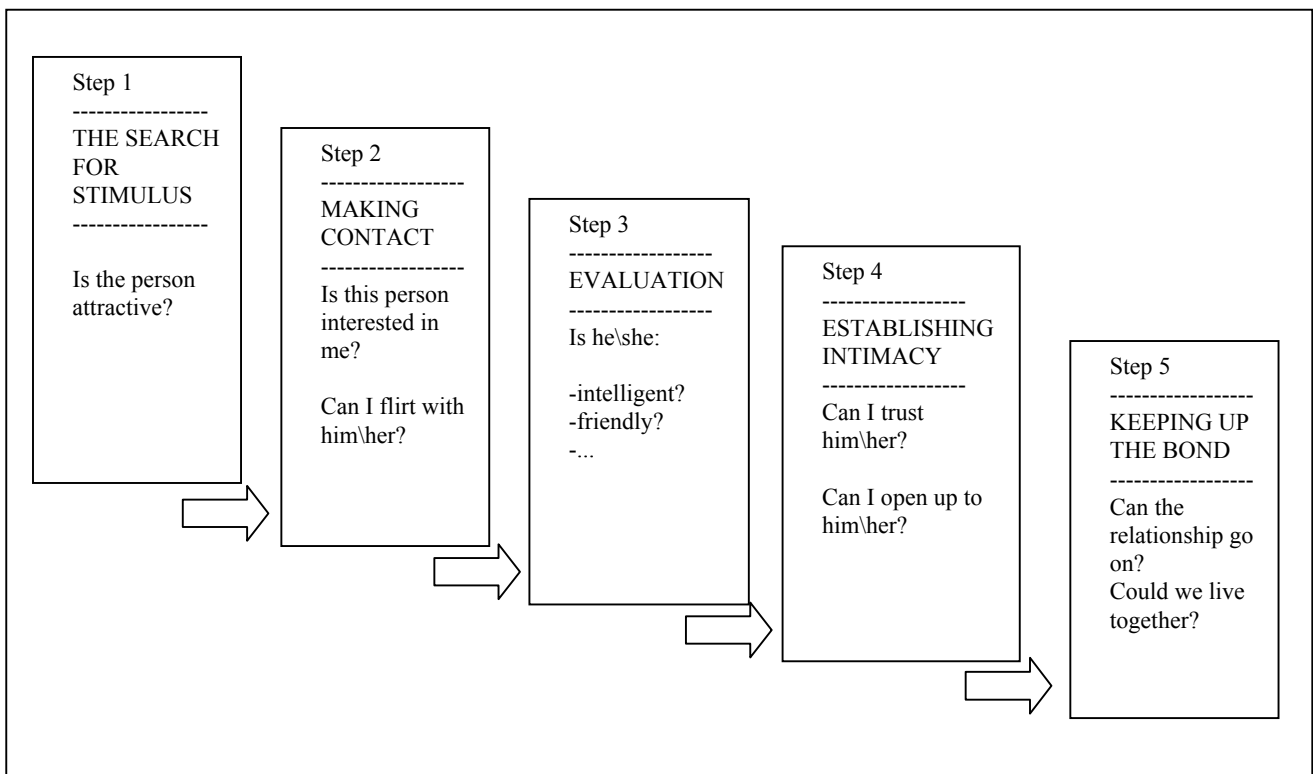

Figure 4.1. The steps of seduction

Figure 4.1, above, shows the procedural dimension of the seductive interaction, time related and structurally divided into progressive stages, as it is shown by Morris [9].

Such segmentation allows us to distinguish and analyze intentions, strategies and communicative behavior at each stage and as far as the description and analysis of seductive communication are concerned; two limits are considered which could lead to a simplification of the phenomenon.

Above all, the model is primarily interested in the actions of the seducer, showing a rigid distinction between the roles of the partners. Secondly, only the sequential dimension of the process is described, thus neglecting not only the aspects of simultaneity and

concurrence, but also of, and specifically, the communicative aspect.

A complementary approach is outlined in Figure 4.2. It shows some of the time-related dimensions which are required to describe seductive communication. The communicative gestures of both partners show how these gestures are essentially interrelated in terms of sequence, frequency, synchronization and simultaneity. According to Watt and Van Lear, [10], Greene [11], and Ciceri and Mistri [12], this increases the grades of freedom which the partners have in making their choices and their actions.

The attention is moved from a structural description of seductive interaction (its phases) to the analysis of the communicative behavior which characterizes each phase.

Bearing these aspects in mind, in the following pages we will focus our attention on some of the communicative strategies of seduction.
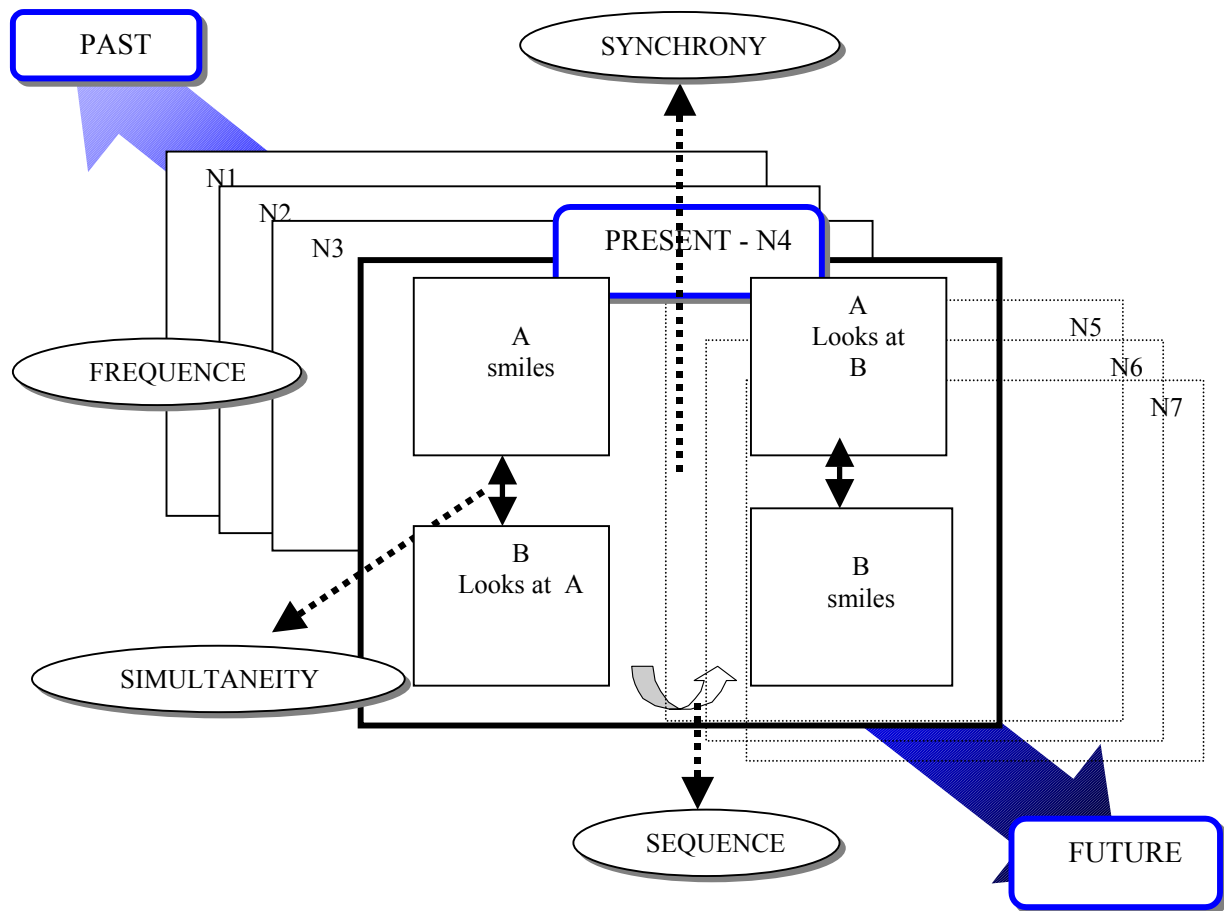
Figure 4.2. Types of behavioral coordination during seductive interaction: movement synchrony, simultaneity, frequence and sequence

4.4 Paradoxical exhibition: getting out of anonymity

The first step of the seductive sequence is to draw attention to oneself to be chosen. In fact, the aim of the seducer is to come out and "change status: from being anyone to being someone" [1]. This primary aim of the would be seducer can be seen nearly everywhere, from the greatest Don Juan to the world of advertising, their greatest wish being that of coming across as exclusive and unique.

Seductive behavior must be broken down into its various subcomponents such as temptation, charm and attraction. It is characterized by communicative performances in which the esthetical aspect is enhanced and heightened whereas the referential and

informative aspect is lessened [3]. It's necessary to come out and show oneself, get noticed and subsequently go on to be selected and to conquer.

In this process both partners are compelled to enhance and stress their qualities and their strong points, as well as to hide their defects and mask their limitations to be attractive. The goal is to become the other person's object of sexual desire. So, during the courtship, each partner tries to appear better than he/she really is, and, in some way, the enticing communication shows several points of contact with deceptive communication.

This "basic" intention in the first phase of seduction is also the prospective of the evolutionist models. Here, sexual attraction is defined as the primary biological drive involved in courtship.

Several ethological studies concerning different species of animals highlight the presence of courtship behavioral forms which have reproduction and pleasure as their primary aim. What we're dealing with is specific and articulated forms of exhibitive behavior which are used to attract the partner, in the same way as aggressive behavior (contention, struggles, etc.) is used to conquer directly. The analysis of these behavioral aspects shows just how relevant they are in this interactive game of exhibition. The "game" itself ends with the complement (union of the two partners) and it is repeated on successive occasions, whenever the reproductive cycle allows it.

According to this perspective, the characteristics involved in determining the choice of partner are directly connected to the possibility of bearing an offspring. It is through this that gender differences can be explained (Coolidge effect). Females, who play a bigger role in the rearing of the offspring, are more selective in their choice of partner. They show a preference for males who have attributes of strength and dominance. Males, on the other hand, are less selective. Since their primary aim is reproduction, their strategy is the number of times they can copulate and the number of partners they can copulate with [7].

Socially and culturally influenced examples of the Coolidge effect can be seen in some partner selection criteria in western culture. These examples have been pointed out in recent research. During the courtship period men tend to emphasize their social status and the resources they have to offer such as dominance and the guarantee of looking after and protecting the offspring.

Women, on the other hand, are viewed as being competitive when it comes to conquering a partner, drawing attention to her morphological indicators of youth and health which are symbols of greater fertility, as Tooke and Camire [13], Barber [14], and Hirsch and Paul [15] sketched out.

However, these aspects constitute only one of the factors taken into consideration by the seducer in his/her evaluation and selection process in the first phase. The criteria for choosing a partner don't involve these characteristics since it must also be taken into account (1) what exactly one wants from the relationship (*type of relationship*, according to Kendrick, Sadalla, Groth and Trost [16]; Klohnen and Mendelsohn [17]) and (2) each individual's beliefs, wishes and expectations (*self components*, according to Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, and Giles [18]).

For example, for a simple date much emphasis is put on physical attraction whereas in a more stable relationship other criteria are involved such as trust, social status and the complementary, likeness-to-oneself criteria.

This exhibition is a strong relational strategy because it implies being directly involved. Also, it entails an implicit declaration of willingness to begin an adventure, as well as settling a commitment and a relational responsibility towards a potential partner [5]. Moreover, this strategic behavior must be carefully weighed out according to the time the partner takes to react and respond.

The exhibition is played out in a relatively narrow psychological space defined, on the one hand, by the desire to attract the partner and, on the other, by the need to respect his/her freedom in order to become, in turn, the object of desire. Consequently, to reach the goal of enticement, it is necessary to leave the partner some degree of freedom and room for movement.

This initial phase of "approach," nonetheless, cannot last too long, because a prolonged exhibitive behavior risks becoming boring or irritating since it can come across as having a hint of arrogance and dominance. Alternatively, it may have the opposite effect, as an indication of insecurity and weakness. What we are up against is a paradoxical exhibition because, though explicit, it is not declared. It is evident, but not formalized. Since during seduction the individual himself is at stake, he cannot run the risk of a flat refusal by the potential partner. If this occurred, it could heavily damage the self-image, and lower the level of self-esteem. So, the seductive exhibition should not go beyond certain limits and should not become so excessive as to avoid the intrusiveness of the partner's subjectivity. Here, he/she could protest and oppose, generally, decisive forms of rejection.

4.5   The gradually reciprocal disarmament and the strategies of obliquity

Once the contact between the partners has been set up, there follows the phase of reciprocal approach. In fact, in the seductive process the partners are inclined to "withdraw," as a basic condition for a growing intimacy, as Duck [19] outlined. In this step, they encourage each other to reveal themselves gradually through a progressive and selective exchange of information about personal history.

A seductive intention must be shown gradually, bit by bit, because of the impossibility of knowing with certainty the intentions or feelings of the other. It is this impossibility of knowing the other's intention which makes the situation risky, and, being over-explicit in showing an interest could lead to rejection, this in turn causing grave damage to how one feels about himself. It's therefore necessary to adopt a type of communication which is "oblique" or indirect [1], a strategy of "saying a little but not saying too much." It's necessary to be able to get the right balance between allowing oneself yet denying oneself, putting oneself forward yet restraining oneself. It's a question of stating a little but not too much and simultaneously being able to observe how the other is reacting.

Let us consider the different possibilities of forwardness and risk in the following examples of allusions to a further encounter.

(1)   *Do you come here often?*
(2)   *I wonder if we'll meet again*
(3)   *I wonder if we could meet again*
(4)   *It would be nice to see each other again*
(5)   *I would like to see you again*
(6)   *I would like to see you again. What about you?*

We can observe the change in the level of indirectness: from the somewhat "cautious" request for information in (1) which doesn't quite reveal the intentions of either party, to the rather latent declaration of interest and request for direct response in (6).

The level of obliquity, or indirectness, depends on the amount of feedback the seducer is getting from the partner. He is trying to calculate how much intimacy is gained from the questions he has posed to the partner and the response he has been given [19]. Explicitly

personal questions are usually avoided as they could lead to a violation of intimacy.

The seducer knows that there are risks involved in being too forward and open, and he doesn't want to jeopardize the possibility of strengthening the bond with the partner and so he must try to use the right amount of forwardness. Oblique communication therefore allows him to combine openness and pleasure whilst allowing him at the same time the reciprocal "disarmament," regarding the content, timing and method involved in the communication.

According to Derlega, Metts, Petronio, and Margulis [20], Dindia [21], and Berger [22], this process of sharing reciprocal experiences allows a gradual reduction of the degree of uncertainty, limiting the risk of becoming vulnerable too early, as pointed out by the uncertainty reduction theory.

Sometimes an exhibition of vulnerability is used as an oblique strategy. It's frequently adopted to make a first move, and it aims at getting the other person to drop his/her defenses or "arms". According to this, the strategy allows the seducer to increase the level of intimacy and then lessen or even neutralize the partner's resistance. He does this by adopting a submissive and somewhat childlike behavior. Child-like in the sense that the behavior conveys a need to be looked after similar to that found in the mother-child relationship. Hass [23] stated that also animals use signals of subordination and mothering or "fosterage" to encourage or invite the partner to approach. This facilitates mating and curbs the instinct of the mate to protect his/her body and living space. It is this instinct of self-protection that causes aggressive and defensive behavior in many vertebrates. Courtship rituals in some species of birds see one bird approaching its mate and behaving as if it were a baby bird still in the nest.

In the same way, doves, for example, press their beaks together prior to mating. This is reminiscent of the beak contact involved when a parent dove gives food to the young.

Research on the vocal qualities of the seducer shows that a "babyish" voice is associated with less power yet more warmth and approachability. In other words, it seems that an infantile voice is a clear sign of willingness to get to know the other person, and it is a signal which is sent out during the first stages of courtship. Berry [24] noticed that an attractive male voice is associated with the characteristics of strength, invulnerability and dominance whereas an attractive female voice is reminiscent of warmth, honesty and kindness. However, all these characteristics can still be detected even when either sex adopts a "babyish" voice. Such information is confirmed in studies by Givens [6] in which he describes the type of voice used by the seducer to assure the partner that he/she can approach without any fear. What we are dealing with here is the tone of voice used by adults when they are speaking with children; i.e., a high-pitched yet low-intensity voice tone.

When the seducer is smiling, looking at and facing the other person, he seems to take on a high-pitched quickened voice. This signals an interest in the partner and a desire to interact with her. In the same way, a submissive attitude, especially where the male is concerned, is a sign of desire to get closer to the partner, as Givens [6], and Kendon and Ferber [25] sketched out.

4.6   Multimodality: the seductive power of signals and *componentiality* of the seductive message

As Barthes [26] reminds us, the cautious seducer always moves about with a "reserve disguise" which he points to in subtle and allusive way. He needs to be able to express

things in such a way that gives to understand something without to take upon oneself any liability for what he has been said.

Therefore, the meaning of the seductive message is "transdiscorsive," it goes beyond what has actually been said, as it is shown by Burgoon and Dillman [27]. The form of seductive message is multimodal, depending on the relation between signals belonging to different systems of expression (vocal, verbal, visual, kinetic), which involves the whole person.

During the course of seductive interactive game, communication is influenced by verbal and nonverbal components. Unlike persuasion, seduction has not only to convince the partner, but also to attract him/her. Furthermore, the seducer must be able to act in an implicit and intriguing manner because enticing the other person needs an attentive and sensitive process of negotiation.

The research which has been carried out in this field up till now has aimed on the one hand to isolate and define nonverbal traits, or signals charged with seductive power. On the other hand, there are experimental studies that try to analyze the role of strategic nonverbal behavior during the management of seductive interaction and to describe the procedures of componential (verbal and nonverbal) message production.

To begin with, more emphasis has been given to the role of eye-contact. The dilation of the pupils is a clear signal of attraction, and a precise psychophysiological signal of interest [9] charged with seductive power. Besides, the time and modality of eye-contact typical in the seductive game have also been described in Western culture (e.g., glimpsing, or looking askance at someone; Givens [6]; Simmel [28]). The higher the tendency to exchange glances and prolong the period of eye-contact, the higher the chances are of putting into action a process of reducing interpersonal distance. Specifically, according to Cupach and Metts [29], women in the West seek and cast more glances than men and, in an alluring interaction, rely more heavily on visual feedback.

One example of this type of communicative behavior is the position that Simmel [28] describes as being typical of a flirt, be it a man or a woman. Here, it takes the form of a sidelong glance so that while the eyes are staring at the partner, the face is slightly turned in a different direction. This method of eye-contact is suitable for conveying ambiguous messages of "interest yet disinterest," for example, when one doesn't want to risk revealing too much. The suitability of using such a strategy, it being made up of various components, or, multimodal signals, can be seen when one acts in a certain way and yet conveys a totally different message which would appear contradictory to his/her intentions.

Grammer [30, 31] confirms that in courtship rituals subjects try to attract the attention of the partner using signals composed of an indirect and often contradictory nature rather than via explicit verbal communication. In this way there's no actual declaration of the "longing" felt by the seducer who is therefore able to avoid the possibility of rejection and getting hurt.

Other than eye-contact there are certain other behavioral strategies which are used to show interest or indeed, to show the opposite (for example, to get away from or to get out of an unpleasant relationship). In the first case behavior patterns well noted in literature are gestures which involve touching oneself (stroking, touching one's hair etc.), smiling a lot and assuming the posture of a person who is interested (chest sticking out, facing the other person and standing really close to him/her). In the second case (wishing to show disinterest) there is less self-touching and smiles, and posture is stationary. Even the eye-contact is different, glances flitting here and there but not necessarily lowered or directed at the partner, as it is outlined by De Weerth and Kalma [32].

According to the studies by Koeppel, Montagne-Miller, O'Hair, and Cody [33], signals of interest in the first phase of interactive seduction constitute expressive patterns which make it possible to recognize what's going on between two people; whether there it is flirting or simply, friendliness, this latter considered to have inferior emotional involvement.

There has been less research done on nonverbal vocal aspects which are a way for the seducer to introduce himself, and it is from the actual voice that the partner can guess or get an idea of some of his physical, social and psychological characteristics such as sensitivity, intelligence, strength, maturity and beauty, as Mallory and Miller [34], Addington [35], Laver [36], and Scherer [37, 38] sketched out.

More specifically, some scholars, i. e., among the others, Mallory and Miller [34], Scherer [39], and Zuckerman, Hodgins, and Miyake [40], have highlighted just how important and relevant the voice is in interpersonal attraction thus confirming the notion of the "vocal attraction stereotype." If the seducer's voice comes across as being attractive, then the partner detects an overall desirable feeling about him.

The voice is also considered to be a very trustworthy means of finding out what type of interaction is going on between two partners [33]. In an interaction based solely on friendship the tone of voice is neutral, warmth of the tone is limited, there is not much laughing and there are lengthy silences. In an interaction involving flirting on the other hand, there's an increase in giggling, warmth and interest, the tone of voice is more intimate, speech is livelier and flows more freely and silence periods become shorter.

4.7   Reciprocity and synchronization strategies

Many seductive strategies and techniques show a high level of reciprocity, as it is shown by Tooke and Camire [13], Greer and Buss [41]. When the seducer introduces him/herself he or she seemingly adapts to the expectations of the other. Both sexes tend to emphasize the physical and psychological characteristics which he/she knows the other would appreciate [30].

Studies by Neto [42] and De Weerth and Kalma [32] point out the most widely used seduction strategy. One such technique is a communication strategy which involves sending out signals of interest and willingness to look after or take care of the partner. Such a strategy sees the seducer taking a back seat and focusing his attention on his partner.

Further studies by Crook [43] which aimed to outline the differences between the male and female approach to seductive strategies highlighted how the selection of different strategies is connected to reciprocity. The woman activates a series of "body signals" which ignite the curiosity of the man thus capturing his attention. Since the reaction in the man constitutes his response, the frequency of the man's advances is highly correlated to the frequency which the woman sends out these signals, much of this serving to reduce the man's sense of insecurity.

Of particular interest are the researches by Grammer [30, 31], and Grammer, Kruck, and Magnusson [44] which highlighted how in an encounter between a woman and a man who don't know each other the degree of reciprocal interest determines the increase in the degree of them synchronizing their behavior. More synchronization corresponds to a high degree of satisfaction which the man and the woman get from the relationship. Such synchronization is noway a "mirror-version," but it has gotten rhythm, something of a courtship "dance". Results reveal that opposite sex interaction differs substantially from

same-sex interaction. In the first there is more complex pattern organization and more stereotypical, longer patterns. Communication in the early stages of courtship should take place on a level where intentions are hidden and unveiled only slowly. If allusion and deception play a role in male-female initial interactions, communication is forced to level of high ambiguity. The fact that the rhythmic patterns are hidden in "noise" makes it difficult for the seducer to perceive actual partner interest directly, and rhythmic pattern synchronization might thus be a versatile tool to communicate without running into danger of deception. According to LaFrance and Ickes [45], this can also explain the findings about negative relation between rapport and posture mirroring in the first step of interaction between males and females and about the irrelevant role that echo and imitation behavior play in courtship [44]. These patterns of behavioral synchronization are obvious signals, too.

Cappella [46] found that smiles, mutual gaze and illustrators correlated positively with synchronization ratings. This underlines the fact that interpersonal coordination is not perceivable directly from single stimuli, because the whole body is involved in the rhythmic structuring of seductive interaction. Thus making it an ideal tool for manipulation.

Research by Singh [47] shows that how attractive a person is correlated to how nice the other person finds him to be. Fondness increases when two people observe a likeness or similarities in their attitudes and behavior. Grammer's studies show that fondness is born out of the ability to coordinates one's attitudes with those of the other person.

This last case is confirmed by recent research carried out by Anolli and Ciceri [48]. Our aim was to contribute to the analysis of suprasegmental transitory characteristics (variations in rhythm, duration, pitch and intensity of speech). Having done this, our aim was then to describe any variations undergone by the persons involved in the seductive interaction from the first phase of selection (unit A) to the phase of self-disclosure (unit B) to the phase of approaching the partner (unit C). We then went on to highlight the differences between successful and unsuccessful seductive language.

Generally, successful seducers (those who succeeded in obtaining a subsequent meeting from the partner) differ, from those who failed to do this, in the ability to modulate the prosodic aspects of their voice in a more flexible way during seductive interaction with their female partner (Figure 4.3).

In fact, as regards pitch, successful seducers generally show more substantial changes in passing from a high modulated profile in the initial phase to a low monotone profile in the final phase of the seductive interaction, whereas in unsuccessful seducers there constantly prevails a medium value of pitch in every phase of courtship.

A similar difference is also observed with the intensity of voice, because the successful seducers appear more competent than the unsuccessful ones in varying the gradations of the suprasegmental aspects. In fact, the first ones start with a loud, variable volume but then lower the intensity of their voice remarkably in the following moments of the seductive game. Considering the indications of variability, they could be considered "variable subjects," because they are more skilled in modifying the volume of their voice, not only in the gradual succession of the interactive moments, but also within the same moment. They can, therefore, rely more on an "orotund" voice when the condition requires competence, confidence and enthusiasm. They are also able, however, to use a medium and low intensity of voice to transmit tenderness and warmth in the subsequent phases of the seductive interaction. On the other hand, the unsuccessful seducers appear as "stable subjects" because they consistently resort to a weak volume of voice in all the phases of courtship.
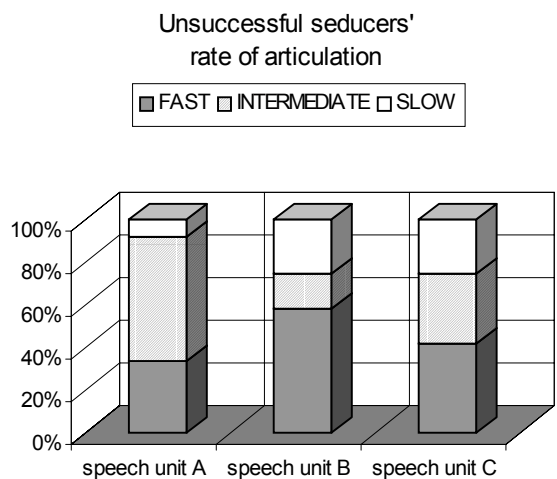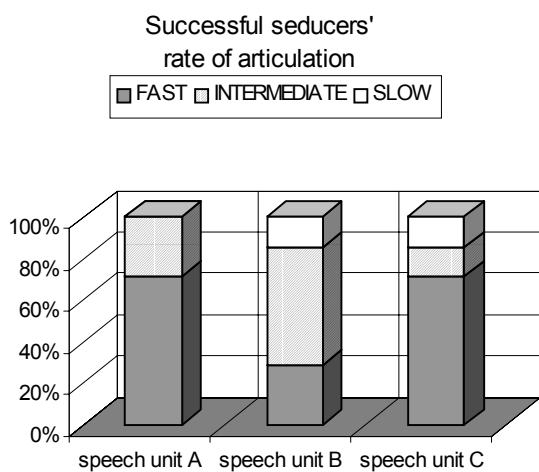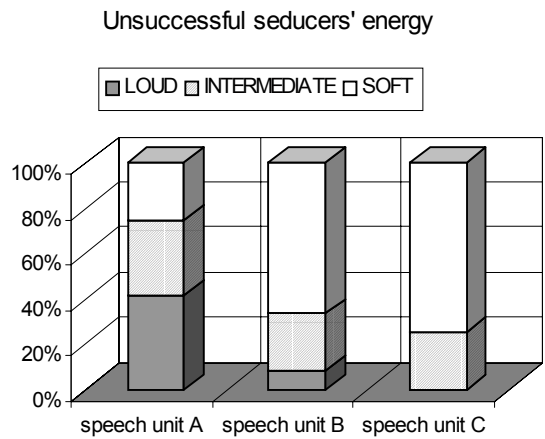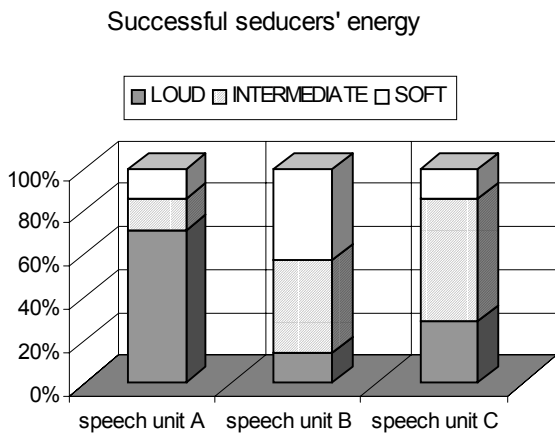
Successful seducers' pitch

☐ HIGH ☐ INTERMEDIATE ☐ LOW

Unsuccessful seducers' pitch

☐ HIGH ☐ INTERMEDIATE ☐ LOW

Successful seducers' energy

☐ LOUD ☐ INTERMEDIATE ☐ SOFT

Unsuccessful seducers' energy

☐ LOUD ☐ INTERMEDIATE ☐ SOFT

Successful seducers' rate of articulation

☐ FAST ☐ INTERMEDIATE ☐ SLOW

Unsuccessful seducers' rate of articulation
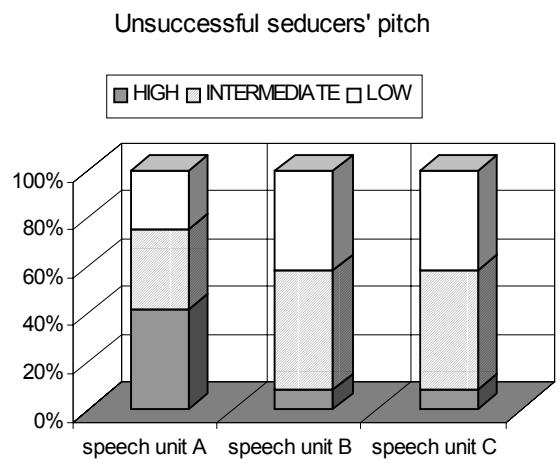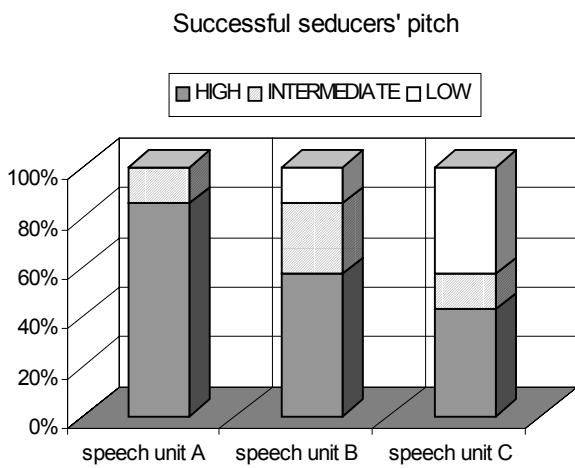
☐ FAST ☐ INTERMEDIATE ☐ SLOW

Figure 4.3. Comparison between successful vs. unsuccessful seducers' vocal profiles

Even in the rate of articulation the successful seducers show a higher variability than the unsuccessful ones, because the former are remarkably more capable of varying the rhythm of their speech in the seductive interaction, compared with the latter.

Generally, the successful seducers have greater and more sensitive attention than the unsuccessful ones in modulating the prosodic aspects of their voice during seductive interaction. It is not only a matter of making one's voice attractive and warm, but also a matter of interactive competence. What is at stake here, is one of the central aspects of seductive communication: the display of unconditional attention toward the partner, making her feel exclusive in the game of role reversal, in which the one who appears to be seduced is the one who seduces.

We can interpret the result of the successful seducers according to the theory of the local management of communication proposed by O'Keefe and Lambert [49]. In fact, they show they possess in all situations a stronger ability to regulate the features of their voice while interacting with the partner. It is not only a matter of planning and programming the communication of a message. It is also necessary to know how to choose the most effective move at that moment, optimize the resources available thereat, as well as turn the hints offered by the partner into opportunities.

On the contrary, the unsuccessful seducers are less variable during the seductive interaction. Their quite stable voice, characterized by a generally low pitch and weak intensity, can be defined "flat" voice, with a more limited number of oscillations and variations. This type of voice seems to belong to shy and depressed people, or to people who prefer to be ignored rather than to let themselves be heard and noticed. Furthermore, the fixed nature of their vocal profiles does not appear very suitable for the seductive game, in which it is necessary "to yield" to the affective mood of the partner.

4.8   Conclusions

In conclusion, seductive interaction does not appear as a uniform and homogeneous phenomenon, but as a flexible communicative process which expresses itself in a wide variety and plurality of behavioral patterns, corresponding to the variety and plurality of communicative intentions (exhibition, approaching the partner, deepening reciprocal knowledge, and reaching of a level of intimacy).

Such flexibility does not depend only on the seducer's ability to display a wide range of communicative behavior charged with seductive power, or rather, vibes of exhibitionism and invitation such as an attractive voice, good looks, dilation of the pupils, etc. Above all, if the seductive game is to be effective then it must involve a degree of flexibility that of being able to harmonize and synchronize with the partner. Every move must be carried out and evaluated according to the partner's response.

The communicative strategies which we have described – paradoxical exhibition, obliquity, synchronization – show at least two things in common; the "saying a little but not too much" aspect and some forms of miscommunication which will both have to be looked into in more detail.

First, these strategies are based on the "undefined content" of the seductive message. As we have already seen (in the descriptions of paradoxical exhibition, the forms of discursive obliquity and the multimodal message) the content of the seductive message is allusive. Its potential efficiency is because of the message is somewhat "unclear" and incomplete. It is because of this that seductive communication is tantalizing, leaving much to the partner's imagination and promising her more than she has already seen. Moreover,

the fact that the content is "undefined" allows the content itself to be adapted and modified to best suit the situation, thus lessening the risk of being too invasive and of being rejected.

Secondly, it is shown how these strategies are carried out concentrating on the "undefined form" of the message, or rather, on the synergy between different expressive forms which make up the message. This allows the seducer to maintain a certain distance with the way he speaks while also enticing the partner by using body movements. Or it can allow him to emphasize and call on the emotional involvement of the other through the seductive power of nonverbal signals.

Indeed, he can also convey his pleasure and interest in the partner by synchronizing and "mirroring" his behavior with hers in this complex communicative game of words, gestures and movements which involve the heart and the mind.

4.9   Acknowledgements

4.10   References

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