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PART IV EDUCATION

1. ASPECTS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION – *the exchange of communicative intentions*

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Abstract: *Communication is a complex process that always involves the exchange of communicative intentions. This paper is one of the efforts to contribute to the shaping of a hybrid theory of interpersonal communication that takes into account various perspectives. The basic approach is that successful communication always involves the exchange of communicative intentions. From this perspective, words do not have an equal relationship, identical to the ideas that a speaker tries to express. The paper presents the different essential characteristics of communication:*

- *it is directed towards objectives;*
- *it is a cooperation effort;*
- *consists of exchanges of ideas between speaker and listener;*
- *is socially anchored.*

The paper analyzes the three types of communication intentions:

• high-level intentions (beliefs, emotions, etc. that a person wants to provoke in someone else);
• medium-level intentions (come in support of the means planned to achieve high-level intentions).
• low level intentions (directed towards the means of achieving medium and high level intentions).

Another important aspect, analyzed in the paper is the coordination of intentions in nonverbal communication as well as skepticism in communication. Finally, a person has to make decisions about how to produce certain emotional experiences for others. Whatever the final answer to questions about the roles of intentions in interpersonal communication, researchers must recognize the diversity of ways in which intentions are communicated, highlighting the multitude of possibilities in which meaning can be expressed and understood.

Key words: *intention, interpersonal communication, skepticism, coordination of intentions*

1. Introduction

Interpersonal communication is an important area of human manifestation - responsible for the effectiveness of adaptation to the world in which we live. The research in this domain outlined several models or sets of theoretical hypotheses that tried to understand this complex process: *the Encoder-Decoder model*, *the intentional model*, *the perspective model* and *the dialogic model*. These models are different through the proposed hypotheses, regarding the way in which *meaning* appears in the use of language. Thus, for encoder-decoder models, meaning is a *property of messages*; for intentional models it consists in the *intentions of the speakers*; for perspective models it derives from the way the *recipient interprets things*; and for the Dialogic models the meaning is an emergent property of the *common activity of the participants*. This approach can be seen as an effort to outline a hybrid approach to interpersonal communication, bringing to the fore the most valuable elements offered by these previous perspectives.

We find in the whole research in this field specific themes, interpreted from different

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theoretical angles, which leads to the identification of several interdependent themes or assumptions. In the following, we will present these essential elements in the research of communication intentions.

2. Exchange of communicative intentions

The exchange of communicative intentions is the key to a successful communication, according to researchers in the field (Grice, 1969). From this point of view, words do not have a direct relationship with the ideas that a speaker tries to express; rather, a single statement, such as “It’s cold here,” can convey a number of meanings (e.g., an appreciation of weather conditions or a request to close the door), and a single meaning can be expressed in a infinite potential number of modes. Consequently, listeners must go beyond the literal meaning of a message in order to obtain the meaning intentionally conveyed by the speaker.

Objectives pursued through communication. Many statements can be described as actions of the speaker (for example, questions, promises, requests). Similarly, Searle *Speech Act Theory* (Searle, 1990) distinguished between three different types of acts that a statement may seek to perform: *a locutive act* (the act of uttering a specific sentence with a specific conventional meaning), an *illocutionary act* (the act of asking, promising, etc. by using a specific locution) and a *perlocutive act* (an attempt to obtain a verbal or behavioral response from the recipient). For example, "It's cold here" is a locutionary act which means it is a statement about the weather; but as an illocutionary act, it could be a request to close the door and, as a perlocutory act, it could be an attempt to cause the listener to close the door.

Communication - a cooperation effort. For some authors the conversation must be understood as an effort of cooperation (Grice, 1975, 1969). Even when their purpose is to challenge, criticize or insult, communicators need to shape their messages to be meaningful to their recipients. As a result, they will address a general principle of cooperation that includes four basic rules. Grice called these rules "conversational maxims": messages should be consistent with *the maxims of quality* (to be honest), and *quantity* (contain no more, no less information than necessary); *relationship* (be relevant to the ongoing discussion); and *manner* (to be laconic and unambiguous). As an example of such communication, Grice recalls the habits of working in the laboratory and human-computer interaction.

Transmitter and receiver. Another important element of the study topic addressed here is conversational analysis, an area that focuses on conversation structure (Robertson S., Black J., &Johnson P.,1981; Cohen P., Morgan J., & Pollack M., 1990). Conversation analysts have shown that conversations consist of ordered sequences of sentences (such as the question-answer dyad), while other authors have argued that alternative forms of communication (e.g., writing) have the same ordered organization (Bratman, 1987). Many of the theoretical ideas of conversation analysts were formulated in psychological terms by Clark H., & Carlson T., 1981, Gibbs R., O'Brien JE, & Doolittle S., 1995) and assumes that speakers and listeners (receivers) work together to ensure that the message is understood. This model subsequently exerted a significant influence on the understanding and study of the psychology of

interpersonal communication and this can be observed in most current studies, marked by the ideas of these researchers.

Communication is socially anchored. The use of language obviously has a deep anchor in social life. Thus, the ways of manifestation are particularly diverse and specific to each society. However, society not only offers countless models of communication, but also creates and modifies them over time. The most direct means of transmitting and modeling specific communication to new generations is education.

3. Varieties of intentions in interpersonal communication

Identifying the communicative intentions of a speaker seems to play a critical role in interpreting what is said in a regular conversation. The intentions that the speakers express in the conversation can be relatively simple.

Types of intentions. Traditionally intentions are conceived in individual and singular terms (Bratman, 1987). For philosophers and psychologists, intentions are those mental acts that occur before the initiation of behavioral actions. *Intentions* (close to desires) are psychological states, and people assume that the content of an intention (desire) must be mentally represented. In particular, a speaker or writer must consider a representation of the set of utterances which he intends to express clearly or to express them more intensely to the public. Each event of individual speech reflects in itself, a hierarchy of intentions, each level having a different relationship with its own consciousness (Dipert, 1993).

a. High-level intentions refer to beliefs, emotions, behavior, and so on, that a person wants to provoke in someone else. For example, we state the statement, "Summer is the best season to go to the Greek islands," with the high-level intention of getting someone to believe in the best season to go to the Greek islands.

b. Medium-level intentions are directed towards objectives that are already the planned means to achieve high-level intentions. In the case of the previous statement about the Greek islands, the average intention is for someone to have a certain perceptual experience, in which he or she recognizes my statement. Therefore, medium-level intentions are directed towards certain features of the physical object, which can be experienced through the senses.

c. Low-level intentions - ultimately, a person has to make decisions about how to induce certain emotional experiences for others. These low-level intentions are directed towards the means of achieving medium-level intentions and, in turn, high-level intentions. Thus, I have to make certain audible sounds, recognized as Romanian or English (depending on the auditor) to get another person to adopt my beliefs about the best season to travel to the Greek islands.

These three types of intentions together reflect a hierarchy of different relationships between means and ends in communication. Understanding what any speaker or writer intended to communicate depends on the ability to deduce high-level, medium- and low-level intentions. However, determining the high-level intentions that can be attributed to an action can be a difficult task. For example, a person's recognition of my intention to get him to think about justice logically implies that the person is thinking about justice, and therefore my intention is accomplished by recognizing it.

Understanding the role that people's verbal intentions play in interpersonal communication requires the study of the condition of *recognition* which involves fulfillment. A successful communication involves speakers doing more than just expressing their words and hoping that listeners or readers will probably make the right deductions about what they intend. Inevitably, speakers and listeners need to coordinate with each other, their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes (i.e., existing common ground), to increase the likelihood that what is intended to be transmitted will be recognized and understood (Clark and Carlson, 1981). In this perspective, communicative intentions are not only individual mental acts, but they are also social products, built jointly by all participants. Consider some interpersonal situations in which the common construction of communicative intentions results in both successful exchanges and failed exchanges. Each of these examples illustrates the role of mutual beliefs in distinguishing authorized from unauthorized inferences (Clark, 1978; Gibbs & Mueller, 1987).

In order to deduce the communicative intentions of the speakers, *social coordination* is necessary, which means conceiving the intentions as a common product of an interaction between a speaker / listener, writer / reader or artist / observer, rather than considering them a strict act, individually, a private mental activity (Searle, 1990). Discourse is a collective behavior, that is a common achievement of two or more people. Examples of collective actions are ubiquitous in everyday life - pushing a car together, checking in a supermarket, orchestral performances, dancing with others or engaging in a conversation are common examples. Collective behavior is not just a useful behavior.

However, there is a need for a characterization of *collective intentions*. Collective behavior is not a simple summation of individual actions: the difference lies in the intentions of the actors. When engaged in collective activity, people are guided by collective intentions, sometimes called *our intentions*. On the other hand, even when they are engaged in a collective activity, where only individuals act - these acts are caused by collective intentions. But how do collective intentions relate to individual intentions that determine the individual constitutive actions of collective behavior? Searle argues that collective actions are primitive and cannot be reduced to individual intentions supplemented only by mutual convictions. At the same time, however, each agent seeks to achieve the collective goal through his individual intention to accomplish the part assigned to him. Collective intentionality presupposes that each person assumes the existence of a feeling of other agents, in their role of "candidates for collaboration".

4. Coordination of intentions in nonverbal communication

An important part of the intentions that people pass on to others is found in nonverbal behavior. A popular belief is that the "language" of the human body can communicate different messages than what people say (for example, my body says "yes", while my words say "no"). Psychological and anthropological studies have explored aspects of how people communicate what they truly believe or intend through body postures, facial expressions, gestures, and so on, as opposed to what their words often express. Many researchers assume that nonverbal behaviors are natural (i.e., signs) and therefore not specifically met with the intent to be recognized

as the transmission of communicative meanings (Rusu, 2021, Kendon, 1981). But detailed studies of gesture and speech suggest that the two are well coordinated and come from the same source (McNeill, 1992).

These studies show, at the very least, that the gestures that accompany spoken language often facilitate listeners 'understanding of speakers' messages (cf. Krauss, Morrel-Samuels, & Colasante, 1991). This conclusion can be extended to suggest that most body gestures, facial expressions, and so on, are specifically produced to be understood as part of a person's general communicative intentions and must be recognized as such in order for successful interpersonal interactions to take place. The hypothesis is that listeners and observers interpret nonverbal behaviors to distinguish between natural and communicative behaviors. People generally, observe the nonverbal behaviors of others in order to discover clues about their possible communication intentions.

Works of art. Another important area of nonverbal communication that requires an examination of individual and collective intentions is *the understanding and appreciation of works of art*. To conceive of something as a work of art, it is necessary to conceive or experience that object or event as an artifact and not as a natural object or event. In the conception of an artifact such as a photograph, people necessarily assume an agent who has a communicative (or expressive) intention, although the identity of the agent (for example, the photographer) and the intention itself is not the purpose. People can conceive of the agent as having medium-term opinions and can link these intentions to an imaginary plan.

Many works of art are not designed to have specific, finite communicative meanings. But most are designed to be recognized as works of art, and part of people's understanding of them as such is possible through this recognition. A wonderful example of how artists' intentions play a direct role in nonverbal interpersonal communication appears in a series of unrepresentative paintings belonging to the two artists, Marilyn Hammond and Thelka Levin. Worried that the visual impact of art was being lost in excessive language, the two painters decided to undertake a project called *Epistolary Paint: A Visual Correspondence*.

The artists agreed on some basic rules for the size of the paintings and limited the colors to the simple palette of red, green, white and gold. They agreed to discuss the project logistics by telephone, but never about the actual art. Ten times, from October 1992 to July 1995, Hammond shipped a finished piece from her studio in Berkeley, California, to Levin in Brookline, Massachusetts. In turn, Levin interpreted each of Hammond's 10 paintings and responded with his own painting for Hammond to interpret (experiment described by Susan R. Fussell & Roger J. Kreuz, in their paper, 2014). Correspondence went back and forth, each painting raising the stakes of their project. The Picture Correspondence Exhibition at the Richmond Art Center in California in the fall of 1995 provides a vivid testimony to Levin and Hammond's intellectual and artistic discourses.

The paintings were hung in order, starting with Levin's opening piece and ending with Hammond's final answer. Going through the exhibition, the spectators could immediately see a contrast between styles, despite the general similarities in the work of the two artists as painters of abstract orientation. Levin painted with bold edges and simple patterns. On the other hand, Hammond, as he later

acknowledged, added complexity to each painting, applying layers of color to make things ambiguous and, as he put it, to "induce many questions." Levin and Hammond not only created their own paintings, but kept separate diaries, with their thoughts and meditations as they painted and reacted to each other's visual "letters."

The journals of the two artists offer a fascinating look at the role of communicative intentions in the creation and interpretation of works of art. Visitors to the Richmond Art Center exhibited considerable time reading these notes; in fact, they spent as much, if not more, time reading the diaries than watching the painting dialogue. To take just one example, Levin wrote at the reception of issue 10 (the artists agreed not to give titles to their songs): *"Despair - a deep despair overwhelm me. This painting shows the leitmotif that haunted me throughout our project - or maybe throughout my life - the suspicion that communication between people is not only difficult, but probably impossible ... I suggest multiplicity, you simplify, I suggest ambiguity, you reduce, I suggest objects, you insist on non-representative forms. I feel that I have been reduced. Negated. Ignored. Rejected. Abandoned. Reduced. Closed. Maybe we can communicate!"* (Susan R. Fussell & Roger J. Kreuz, 2014)[214]

These observations about their visual correspondence dramatically illustrate how important it was for Hammond and Levin to understand their communicative intentions. Of course, the very nature of their collaboration forced both painters and observers to question the interaction of intentions in creating works of art. However, taken as a whole, as Hammond remarked at the end of the project, the epistolary exhibition shows that the paintings could carry all that conversation, all that emotion, all these ideas.[215]

5. Skepticism about communication intentions

The above examples illustrate the importance of communicative intentions in interpreting meaning in different interpersonal situations. For most researchers in the field of cognitivism, it is difficult to imagine that people are successful in communication without a certain understanding of what the speakers intend to receive through what they say. In their work on communicative intentions, cognitivists have not even considered the idea that communicative intentions could be an ephemeral byproduct of linguistic understanding, considering them, on the contrary, an essential, indispensable part of the way of understanding utterances (Cohen, Morgan and Pollack, 1990).

However, specialists in various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences have often expressed skepticism about the role of intentions in interpreting meaning (cf. Iseminger, 1992). Many theorists, for example, argue that understanding *written* language differs from understanding *oral* speech because written language tends to be more "decontextualized," with fewer clues about an author's possible communicative intentions (Olson, 1977). Finding meaning in a text cannot depend on retrieving something about an author's intentions, because there is no common ground between the author and the reader.

Other researchers argue that intentions are often inaccessible, because

[214] Fussell Susan R. & Kreuz Roger J. (2014). Social and Cognitive Approaches to Interpersonal Communication, in *Psychology Press*, New York, p. 118
[215] Idem, p 132

whatever a speaker intends, there are always other meanings, at other levels, that are transmitted simultaneously (Lyas, 1992). For example, a person might say one thing, but communicate other meanings through bodily gestures or other means. What meanings an actor specifically intends can never be known for sure. Moreover, an individual's communicative intention can be particularly problematic when he or she assumes various people, perhaps competitors. A speaker, author or artist could assume a literal posture at one time and an ironic posture at another. In many cases, intentions may be ambiguous or indeterminate, reflecting the mixed intentions of a particular individual at different times.

Other options. This discussion of literary interpretation suggests that the interpretation of meaning in interpersonal communication cannot be limited or constrained in any way by recognizing the intentions of speakers or authors. At the same time, however, the arguments of literary theorists do not directly imply that listeners never seek the complex intentions of speakers as part of their immediate, largely unconscious, processing of linguistic meaning. After all, the analysis of what people say or do in response to what other speakers say focuses on the products of understanding, not on the mental processes by which people arrive at their interpretations of linguistic meaning (Gibbs R., & Mueller R., 1987). Listeners may immediately and unconsciously seek to recapture the speaker's intentions, but then overcome those intentions when responding publicly to what is being said. In other words, it is very possible to derive meanings from statements that vary from what the speakers intend when they make these statements.

In fact, there is experimental evidence that it is easier for people to understand written language if it is assumed to have been composed of intentional agents (i.e., individuals) rather than a computer, without an intentional agency (Gibbs R., O ' Brien JE, & Doolittle S., 1995). Participants were presented with comparative statements and told that they were written either by famous poets of the twentieth century or were randomly constructed by a computer program. The task of the study participants was to assess the “significance” by comparison; in another study, they read and pressed a button when they understood the statements. Readers found metaphorical expressions, such as "Cigarettes are time bombs," more meaningful when such statements were written by famous poets of the twentieth century (intentional agents) than when the same metaphors were seen as constructions of a computer program.

Also, people needed much less time to understand the meanings by comparison, when they were told that the statements were written by poets, than when they were told that they were written by the computer. Moreover, it took readers more time to reject the meaningless words when they were written by poets, as they assumed that poets have specific communicative intentions in the elaboration of their statements, which is not true for the computer. Consequently, people put much more effort into trying to understand abnormal phrases, such as "A scalpel is like a horseshoe," when they are supposed to be written by poets. However, the subjects participating in the experiment immediately rejected the same abnormal expressions as "meaningless" when they were told that they were written by a computer, because computers are supposed to have no communicative intentions.

6. Conclusions

Cognitive and social psychology provides many explanatory details on how speakers and listeners and, to a lesser extent, writers and readers, collaborate in the production and interpretation of language in interpersonal communication. The wide variety of intentions that speakers, writers, and artists communicate suggests that relatively simple task-oriented experiments, such as referential communication games studied by experimental psychology, do not capture the complexity of interpersonal communication. We have found that speakers often convey multiple intentions. Even a single conversational statement can convey several communicative intentions.

The meanings that people deduce from linguistic and non-linguistic situations are not limited to what speakers, authors or artists specifically intend. Another challenge for psychological theories of interpersonal communication is to explain how and when recipients go beyond communicative intentions to create meaningful interpretations. It is important to note that these "interpretations beyond intentions" are not mistakes, in the sense that a recipient fails to understand what a speaker or author intends to convey. Rather, people make deductions that they accurately recognize and that seem relevant, either contextually, because of the situation, or personally of the recipient.

Whatever the final answer to questions about the role of intentions in interpersonal communication, researchers must recognize the diversity of ways in which intentions are communicated and multiple researches in various academic fields today focuse on the different ways in which meaning can be expressed and understood.

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