



Communication, Language and Subjective Production of Meanings. A Reflection on the Idea of Sharing in Communication

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Abstract

This text elaborates a reflection on the idea of sharing associated with communication, an idea that is closely linked to the role of language and meanings as socio-cultural and historical products. It part of questioning the way in which this idea has been configured from understanding meanings and language as something that pre-exists the individual and it propose an alternative to understand meanings and language as products of cognition processes that develop within the individual as part of his vital dynamics, where communication becomes an expressive behavior of a subjective type where the cognitive-world of the individual unfolds, making evident the presence of the processes of subjective production of meanings involved in the processes of cognition that in turn, they are fundamental to guarantee adaptation and survival to the individual in the environments in which his life is inserted: physical, social and symbolic-cultural. This reflection is developed from a transdisciplinary position and it is epistemologically situated in the perspective of methodological individualism, which fundamentally articulates with the main premises of neurosciences, biosemiotics, cognitive sciences and neurophenomenology, from a communicative reading around the social and social interaction.

Keywords: Communication; Meanings; Language; Cognition; Experience

Introduction

The term communication, from its own etymology, speaks of what is common, of what is shared. However, at least from the empirical-concrete point of view-which is where the ontology of the real to which all science is due-is endorsed, it is not very clear whether it is shared or what is shared. The academic tradition on communication has placed meaning at the core of what is common and consequently of what is shared; here, from a more radical perspective, it seeks to place this center in the interaction, in line with the systemic tradition that is based on social psychology and interpretive sociology, where meanings are the matter from which one interacts through language.

However, this approach to the common from interaction and language will be done from a subjective approach; in the case of interaction, in accordance with the epistemological postulates of methodological individualism, in particular the one proposed by Watkins J [1] that individuals-the ultimate constituents of the social world-act according to their resources, beliefs, desires, dispositions and understandings of one's own situation; In the case of language, we will start from the recent developments of neuroscience in its peripheral aspect and cognitive science with neurophenomenological roots that make the interrelation between body and mind the basic scenario of cognition, which is where we intend to base our approach to language as a cognitive instance, from reflexively exploring its role in the subjective production of meanings.

The foregoing will serve as the basis for understanding communication as a subjective behavior of an expressive type, in which the individual, language, cognitions, meanings and interaction experiences are involved. This supposes a questioning of communication as an instance of socialization based on the act of sharing and exchanging information, which is basically what allows communication to be understood as a mechanism that forges the social through interaction. For this reason, both from social psychology and from interpretive sociology, interaction and language are intertwined under the assumption of understanding, while interaction is carried out under implicit and explicit norms and rules that frame it, and where understanding is based on the existence of shared meanings, anchored in the historical and socio-cultural matrix where they have meaning and relevance, which is in turn where language is inscribed. Thus, from both perspectives, both language and meaning are interrelated since language is understood as a codified system of information that allows the emergence of meaning, that is, of the information signified.

The foregoing postulates that there is no language without meanings or meanings without language, precisely because language codifies and constructs meanings that are expressed through it. This is what pays for the intersubjective property of language and socio-cultural meanings as part of the collective and historical memory, and communication is the mechanism that deploys them to reproduce or dispute these meanings. However, although from this level of abstraction communication can be defined as a mechanism, communication is also an action: the action of expressing meanings, that is, of projecting outwards, towards the other (or if you prefer, towards the common) the information signified by means of language.

The idea of communication as action thus corresponds to another level of analysis of communication since it postulates a phenomenal conception of communication, that is, of an empirical-concrete type. From this phenomenal conception, intersubjectively which from social psychology and interpretive sociology constitutes the foundation of the social is not understood as a type of collective configuration that supervenes on the individual as Kincaid H [2] said, but as a “between” subjectivities or individualities coinciding with Simmel G [3]. That is, as a set of intertwined relationships structurally and contingently, rather than as a formalized fabric of interrelationships previously given by the social roles of the subjects.

From this conceptual repositioning, understanding communication as a mechanism that allows social interaction not only advocates an instrumentalist and subsidiary conception of communication and the language in which it is codified and expressed, but also places understanding as

an attribute of the intersubjective, equating communication to understanding while the latter, in social terms, supposes a socio-cultural and symbolic coding that allows interaction in terms of flow and exchange of information.

This is how, from the understanding, communication is installed in the social-intersubjective through the exchange of socio-cultural meanings, so that they adopt a supra-individual character due to their historical and socio-cultural nature; From there, the idea of sharing meanings in communication becomes possible, since meanings constitute information units of common domain. For this reason, this instrumentalist conception of communication poses sharing as an action of interaction that builds in communicative terms— the whole, the collective, insofar as meanings are conceived as previously given or existing abroad. That is what the socio-cultural character of the meanings that from social psychology and interpretive sociology figure in communication supposes, and it is in turn the criterion that places them in an autonomous sphere to the individual.

Thus, as can be seen, from the approaches of social psychology and interpretive sociology, meanings precede communication, and communication only uses them in interaction. This is, in short, what is postulated from the Symbolic Interactionism, from which they drink both one and the other approach. But is this what happens?.

To answer the previous question, it is necessary to understand how meanings arise, and not assume as is currently done in the field of communication studies, and in general in the social sciences that they are given in advance and pre-exist from language. This is what underlies the idea of sharing communication and it is precisely what this reflection intends to question.

Language, Cognition and Subjective Meaning

Let's start by saying that the meanings are the result of the processes of meaning, that is, of processes of production and attribution of meaning; but it must be understood that these processes do not have a solely socio-cultural origin. The new developments of cognitive sciences, neurosciences and biosemiotics allow us to postulate that meaning is part of the natural world as it is involved in the survival and adaptation of organisms to the environment. Viewed in this way, meaning is, in essence, cognition; that is to say: knowledge production process, knowledge being its result. From the neurosciences, cognitive psychology and cognitive sciences, it is known that knowledge is “packaged” in meanings that in turn are grouped into nuclei of meanings (according to their similarity), as well as in logics of meaning (systems of meanings where they work beyond the situation or context in which cognition takes place) where language being the

mechanism that allows such packaging.

Language thus provides both nuclei and logics of meaning, since from it is possible to classify meanings into similar and different, and also articulate them with others of a different type; but language, above all, makes meanings name and build realities (be it objects, events, people, fictions), installing them in the mental world of the individual and on a collective scale in the symbolic world of culture. In both cases, this packaging requires some degree or type of long-term memory; In the case of the human individual, which is specifically the one we are talking about here, this memory is installed neutrally and biologically from a functional point of view in the brain and other organs, forming part of our cognition. And in the case of the collective, this memory is culturally accumulated and superimposed through language, as Lotman I [4] pointed out.

But since neither the mind nor culture are dissociated from the body or bodies that generate them, it must be assumed that memory is also constructed sensibly, and in the case of human beings, in a clearly affective way, so that all meaning, core of meaning and logic of meaning are configured and maintained over time from the interdependent superposition of its two components: the sensible and the intellectual.

If, as Damasio A [5] suggests, the mind is what emerges from the situated relationship between body and brain, the mind is also both logical and affective, and it is the mind that builds culture through bodies in action, therefore the culture, according to Ingold T [6], is what we humans do when inhabiting existence, leaving in it the trace of our existential step; culture and society are thus configured as a unit. For this reason, although culture and society constitute autonomous spheres of meaning and action that precede the individual, these are nothing more than the result of the sedimentation of the processes of interrelation and juxtaposition of meanings that are configured in the heat of collective human action; besides, they are the ones that found and base the historical processes.

Something similar happens with language since, although historically it precedes us, language is not alien to the being that produces it. Language carries with it the logical-affective imprint of every subjective and intersubjective cognitive instance. As Lacan suggested, language allows codifying what can be codified, because there is always a part of the corporeal-affective that remains unrepresented [7]; what can be inserted into the symbolism of language will do so, in the manner of a translation process, with its profits and losses, thus installing it in the common for its use.

That is why language not only makes it possible to name the affective or emotional states of individuals that

are produced subjectively and intersubjectively in the form of meanings, but also to construct meanings of collective domain around affective and logical states even if they are not experienced. Language thus constitutes a structure for meaning that is produced from experience as much as it is constructed from convention; there is no arbitrary language, Levi-Strauss rightly pointed out that all language is configured based on its context of use, and we add here, and also based on its use as a mental model of a cognitive, encoding and encoder character of the subjective and intersubjective experience; encoding and encoder of the reality in which the experience takes place.

From both perspectives, language in social interaction constitutes it, and it constitutes it historically, that is, in the tensional dialectic between action and context in which the subject individual and collective is immersed. Social interaction is thus charged with affectivity and logic, with desires and interests, with passions and calculations; and language constitutes the vehicle of this intertwining, either in a purely cognitive way as an instance of production and subjective encoding of information that derives directly from experience and is configured based on the significant materialities available; or as a system for encoding and decoding symbolic information, which in so far as it precedes experience only implies the use of meaning but not its production.

In the conjunction between the cognitive and instrumental nature of language, that is, between the production of meanings and their use, the indissoluble and interdependent imbrication between the body and the mind or between experience and thought, it is possible to find the always tensional articulation between individual and collective, the personal and the historical. That is why it is possible to maintain that there is a closer relationship than could be supposed between biology and culture, between brain-body and meaning, between the flesh and the mind, between what is felt and what is thought.

The Subjective Production of Meanings: Body, Affects and Action

As has been tried to demonstrate, it is from these interrelationships that meanings emerge as “packages” in which knowledge is condensed at a cognitive and also linguistic level (although it should be noted that linguistic synthesis does not necessarily exhaust it, since sometimes knowledge cannot be fully represented: as already mentioned, there is an ineffable dimension of knowledge that escapes language, symbolic coding), and from that interrelation, knowledge synthetically translated into meanings builds reality for the being or subject who experiences it and, cognitively at least, also produces it.

This construction can be ephemeral, punctual, situational, but it can also last over time, become more complex, memorize, and articulate. The construction of reality through cognition has been extensively explored by Piaget, and at the current times neurophenomenology has offered interesting clues about the role of the body (as a body that moves and feels) in the emergence and development of cognitive processes and consequently in the processes of production of meaning. From this point of view which is where we settle here to talk about language and meaning from a subjective approach knowing is producing information.

The construction of information is thus the result of a tripartite relationship between the subject, reality and the contextual or situational relationship from which cognition takes place. As Bunge M [8] points out, knowledge is the result of the permanent and necessary dialectical relationship between the rational and cognitive interior of human beings and the exterior space-time world in which they operate. Thus, all knowledge has an instrumental character because knowing is surviving, adapting. The biology of knowing by Maturana H, et al. [9] advocates this and defends, just as Peirce did a little more than a hundred years before: reality is inaccessible without cognitive mediation.

Reality, whatever it is, is reality for a subject who knows from the body-mind interrelationship, which is also a way of knowing from the emotional-rational intertwining [10]. Understood in this way, the meanings construct the experienced reality, insofar as it is a reality signified from the experience of the subject in the situation of cognition, this experience being both logical and affective; and this, moreover, irrespective of whether the pre-existing meanings are used.

Seen in this way, all meanings have an intellectual, rational dimension and another sensorial, emotional and affective; both one and the other can be reduced to the pre-existing language and in fact they are. The terms and statements that account for the affective instance of cognition in language constitute a manifestation of the above. But language not only pre-exists, but as has been mentioned before it is created in a situation and by repetition. Varela F [11] and Varela F, et al. [12] point out with respect to the latter that knowledge emerges from regular cognitive patterns that take place from different stimuli and depending on the corporeality of the individual, so that these patterns configure a cognitive language of an imaginal type (not representational, but phenomenological) that settles down in the mind of the individual associating a given stimulus to the meaning of the individual's experience in/before/with it, to the extent that the meaning-experience relationship is repeat similarly.

From the neurosciences, this cognitive relationship between meaning and experience is also confirmed empirically. Damasio F [13] suggests in this regard that the meaning of something depends on the implication of that something with corporality, with respect to the idea or image that the human brain can make of the body in which it is housed. Something similar is affirmed from biosemiotics when pointing out that the encoding and decoding of signals from the environment constitutes a process of production and interpretation of signs that are such to the extent that they are significant to organisms in their survival and adaptation [14].

In this sense, it seems clear that cognition is a subjective process of meaning production at different levels and degrees: from the metabolic, more automatic; through the sensitive or affective to the intellectual or logical [15]. It is a process that, as Jonas H [16] said, involves the body in an interested way: the individual knows because he is interestedly involved in the world-and Ponty M [17] would add-and in the first person. The production and interpretation of signs, in accordance with the postulates of biosemiotics, thus constitute cognitive processes involved in survival.

And what is the production and interpretation of signs if not processes of production and attribution of meaning? Some of these signs remain open, indeterminate, and always significant; others, as in the case of culture, are codified and closed. These closing and opening processes depend on the use of signs, that is, on how stable and permanent over time the significant-meaning-referent-subject-context relationship turns out to be, and here, in favour of this stability, symbolic language plays a very relevant role since it formalizes the closure of the sign by tying it not only to a meaning, but also to pre-existing nuclei and logics of meaning. For this reason, although it is possible to say that all languages encode, it is necessary to distinguish between strong and weak encodings, or what is the same: between encodings that are more and less permeable in time.

Closer encodings generate less permeable structures of meaning, that is, less likely to be transformed, even if one of the components of the cognitive relationship varies (subject who knows, object of knowledge, context of cognition); This is the case of encodings that are involved in genetic and neurobiological processes [9,18], or in hegemonic cultural processes [4], which are what make up social structures, as well as the collective, historical and intersubjective sense of the social world.

The same does not happen-or at least not to the same extent-with phenomenological and psychological processes where the weight of the experience in the first person, within

the body-mind unit, is subjectivized [19]. There, the coding is revealed to be weaker, porous and permeable, that is, more susceptible to change, which to a large extent is due to the use of the sign-not a symbol in constant possibility of change, insofar as the adaptive nature of the individual requires it.

Based on the foregoing, it is possible to say that those meanings that are involved in highly codified logics of meaning diminish their capacity for change insofar as they constitute, cognitively speaking, meanings that are functional to the relationship of use that is established between the individual and his or her environment [18], understanding by functional that property that enables adaptation to the symbolic, physical or social environment in terms of conservation of the identity and autonomy of the individual as postulated from the New Cognitive Science [11,18] and its direct antecedent, the biology of knowing by Maturana H, et al. [9].

On the contrary, those meanings in which the loss of the subject's identity and autonomy are not compromised or are not compromised in terms of adaptation and survival, configure functional meanings for transformation, even if it is a controlled transformation even unconsciously by the individual himself. Here the meanings that are produced subjectively have greater incidence. In this way, the subjective production of meanings occurs outside the symbolic scenarios (although in perennial contact with them), as it is produced from the corporeal, sensitive and affective experience of the individual with the environment.

Communication and Subjective Production of Meanings: The Stage of Expression

As has been seen, the subjective production of meanings constitutes a cognitive process that is present yes or yes and in all circumstances throughout the human life cycle. It is an essentially biological and neurobiological process that does not differ categorically from that of other living organisms, although it differs in degree and nature. So the meanings produced subjectively build the first and primary cognitive and mental framework of the individual [5,20], which is updated in light of the incorporation or insertion of the symbolic, the historical and the social- group during the different stages of the socialization process in which the individual is necessarily inserted as a social being.

From the perspective described around language and its cognitive character, the subjective production of meanings cannot be avoided and constitutes the raw material of all individual action. It is not a question here of ignoring the historical-symbolic constraints to which an individual is subjected by the mere fact of being a social individual, but rather of pondering the existence and presence of subjectively

produced meanings as personal and personalized meanings insofar as they configure the unquestionable part felt and lived of its mental-subjective configuration.

As already said, these subjectively produced meanings are present in all the actions of the individual, in their behaviors and thoughts, and since communication from the phenomenal and phenomenological point of view; it is a behavior that does not escape it. This is how communication can be defined as a behavior in the order of saying, that is, an expressive action that precisely allows the projection of the individual's cognitions through signs and symbols of different materialities ordered in "packages" of meanings [21,22].

Communication, thus understood, constitutes a way that the individual has of inhabiting the world and of inhabiting it socially because as a projection, communication is a taking out the meanings that make up the mental world of the individual [21,23] that in essence are meanings produced subjectively, since even the use of pre-existing meanings demands their insertion in the system of meanings that the individual constructs cognitively from their experience with them, to be used in terms of projection and behavior.

Thus, communication projects out meanings that are embedded in the individual's cognition experience, subjecting them, since this is what allows the projection to become an action from which the individual expresses himself Romeu V [21] through expressing in turn those meanings that can only be theirs, the fruit of their own cognitive harvest. Sharing and exchanging subjectively produced meanings implies appealing to the common as an instance of sociality, not of understanding (or at least not necessarily).

In this sense, communication does not configure a mechanism for sharing meanings, making their exchange possible; In fact, the very term "exchange" here constitutes a metaphor that advocates horizontality and harmony, as if it were possible to define communication from these attributes. Many communicative conflicts, misunderstandings and even the absence of understanding reveal that in communicative phenomena, exchange is not the rule but the exception.

For this reason, the subjective production of meanings constitutes a fundamental premise to define communication from a different approach than sharing, mean different from sharing and the understanding that normally underlies its definition as the basic mechanism of interaction. The subjective production of meanings reveals rather that communication allows the expression of the individual insofar as it allows him to project himself outward through the meanings that make up his mental world [23].

It is this projection that constitutes the core of communication as expressive action or behavior, so that when this individual enters into a relationship with other individuals, or with situations, institutions, fictions, symbols, values, objects and various events of the social world, he does so from what he is, what he feels and thinks all this, the result of the configurations in which the cognitive processes of subjective production of meanings are involved constituting social action from the interaction that it establishes with everything that surrounds it, and constituting in turn to himself as an individual from said interaction as a historical being and a social subject. This constitution, of course, supposes a process of updating the subjectively produced meanings within his mental world, in the same way that his mental world updates the social through his action.

From the field of communication, this two-way intervention can be characterized as a phenomenon of expressive convergence [21,24], that is, as a phenomenon where communication in the social field is configured as a convergence or confluence of subjective expressions, to the extent that some serve to update the others and vice versa. The phenomenon of expressive convergence presupposes conflict as well as dialogue, but it never presupposes a sharing of meanings because they cannot be shared, in any case they can be used in a more or less similar way to designate more or less similar realities as well.

Due to the above, it is possible to affirm that there is no sharing or exchange of meanings in communication because there is no "give and take" of meanings; there is rather a struggle to project each other in communication, even if this struggle is not conscious or crossed by mechanisms and power relations. To the extent that the production of meanings can only be a subjective act as a cognitive act carried out by the individual, the process of updating meanings that takes place during and after the interaction that occurs through the process of convergence expressive constitutes a struggle to accommodate the meanings and reconstruct the mental world of the individual that has been altered by contact with the diversity of subjective expressions involved. The need to make this adjustment is due to the fact that the mental world of the individual is an eminently significant world; a world from which he has to manage his life not only communicatively projecting himself into it but, above all, choosing (even unconsciously) the specificity of said projection.

Conclusion

Making communication a sharing of meanings simply reduces it to being understood from an area of the common that exists only from the heterogeneity of the collective, it does not allow understanding the strategic sense of

communicative action beyond assuming its intentionality towards the rest, and also hinders the understanding that communication does not seek understanding (understanding is rather a collateral effect of it) but focuses on affirming the existence of subjective realities insofar as said affirmation constitutes the way in which the individual asserts himself, even existentially, in a world that is alien to him and that he neither controls nor can control. Communication, seen in this way, cannot be a socialization mechanism from which social behavior and thought are regulated, but in any case it is a learning environment to carry out that regulation. Expressive convergence phenomena not only constitute a source of information about what is expressed, but also about who expresses it, how, his scope and limitations, contradictions and loopholes.

Communication is an expressive behavior through which individuals do not share themselves with the other, but instead project themselves on/with/before the other (Romeu, 2018) [21]; neither do they share their meanings, but rather dispute them because it is about themselves, that is, a dispute over the preservation of their identity and autonomy as individuals in the social world (Romeu, 2021c) [25]; Through communication, individuals show themselves to the outside, projecting the meanings that configure them as such, affirming themselves as individuals by affirming their subjective idea of reality. Thus, as can be seen, communication becomes an instrument of the individual, a vehicle based on his survival and adaptation in the social and symbolic world in which he is inserted: a world, without a doubt, in which it needs to show and/or to mask his feelings and his thoughts, his actions and intentions in his inevitable relationship with his surroundings. Communication constitutes that instance of expressive possibility from which to interact: insofar as it enables expression, it enables interaction and with it the guarantee of sociality necessary to explore from oneself the reality that one needs to know in order to adapt and finally survive.

At the end of the day, as can be seen, this subjective approach to communication makes it possible to open a gap for reflection on the role of communication in the historical constitution of the social, and it does so by articulating the biological, the neurobiological and the neurophenomenological with the symbolic, the historical and the socio-cultural issues, having language as a bridge and the cognitive function that it fulfils in the subjective production of meanings, since in essence they are the ones that participate in communication. This is what allows communication to be assumed as a racking of meanings in the heat of the back and forth that occurs in the interaction between subjectivities, rather than as a sharing. The etymology of communication from the *communis* appeals to its duty to be, to its normative and even teleological character; but in reality in

communication nothing is shared much, rather everything is disputed a lot. The common is external to communication itself insofar as it depends on the symbolic language that it uses to build consensus; that is the only thing that is shared and creates community, but communication is just in any case rather exceptional the phenomenon that only allows the emergence of the common from the social point of view.

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