

Communication phenomenon and skills necessary to master communicative competence in favor of peace culture: Latin American context

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Abstract: This article presents the results of documentary-bibliographic pedagogical research, which goal was to conceptualize communication as a phenomenon and define the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential for the development of students' communicative competitiveness in favor of peace culture. Authors found, that the domain of the communicative competence by students demands the development of psychophysiological capacities and the appropriation of sociocultural competences such as knowing how to assume responsibilities, be precise, don't give opinion in a generalized way, be transparent and act naturally; accepting criticism constructively and non-destructively; knowing well what is transmitting, considering capabilities, needs, expectations, interests of receivers; being assertive, patient, tolerant, able to listen actively.

Keywords: concept of communication as a phenomenon; peace culture; students' communicative competitiveness; psychophysiological communicative capacities; sociocultural communicative competences; active listening; responsible transmission of information.

1. Introduction

Education today faces a context of constant transformations and its challenge is to adapt its contents and teaching methods to be able to attend students who enter the classrooms with numerous communication needs. It seeks to develop the social practices of language so that students can apply them in everyday life.

In the Latin American region, educational communication, view from the new educational paradigm (education in complexities), in which the development in the student of the peace culture occupies a primordial place. The education in complexities is conceived as a new scientific perspective, which term prefigures the academic field of research and practice of the processes of production, transmission, processing and acquisition of information as learning processes. Educational communication goes far beyond the means of teaching and learning, every communicative action is carried out with the objective of reproducing or developing educational ecosystems.

The student's communicative competitiveness undoubtedly favors the development of the peace culture. Thus, UNESCO in the *Declaration and the Integrated Action Plan on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy* establishes that "Education must develop the capacity to recognize and accept the values that exist in the diversity of individuals, genders, peoples and cultures, and develop the ability to communicate, share and cooperate with others" [22].

The study of the works of Latin American scientists (Alsina, 2001; Arango, 2005; Araujo and Pereira, 2014; Argudin, 2012; Bernal-Leongómez, 1986; Canto-Sperber and Dupuy, 2004; González, 1998; Rychen and Hersh-Salganik, 2004; Correa-Bautista, 2007; Jaik-Dipp and Ortega-Rocha, 2011; López-Cuéstara, 2001; Martín-Serrano, 2007; Rincón-Castellanos, 2017; Tacca-Huamán, 2011; Tobón, 2005; Vidales-González, 2015, among others) allows affirming that social practices are constituted by the different uses of language that allow students oral or written communication: receive, transmit and use the information; the representation, interpretation and understanding of reality; the construction and exchange of knowledge; the organization and self-regulation of thought; emotions and behavior.

The social practices of language face the challenge of overcoming traditional practices of knowledge transmission based on the repetition of knowledge without seeking that students find a way to acquire knowledge, as they understand it best. With the use of these obsolete practices, doesn't meet one of the basic purposes of teaching: to develop communicative skills that allow the student to express thoughts, emotions, experiences and opinions; dialogue and resolve conflicts; form a critical judgment; generate ideas and structure knowledge; give coherence and cohesion to the discourse; enjoy the aesthetic use of language; and develop self-esteem and self-confidence; in other words, promote student's peace culture [20; 23].

In the words of Kaplún (1992), “[...] communication can be understood as interaction, exchange, dialogue, as life in society, all this is inextricably linked to the productive needs of the subject and cannot exist without language. Communication is shared thinking” [18]. Communication, as mentioned by this author, is directed, planned and controlled. It is planned because it is first conceived what is going to construct the message; it is directed because this process is not spontaneous, but is organized and structured; and it is controlled because its effects can be measured during the process and you can interact on it to improve.

However, how to achieve the necessary communication skills in students? In order to answer this question, we chose to carry out documentary-bibliographic research, which goal was to conceptualize communication as a phenomenon and define the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential for the development of students’ communicative competitiveness in favor of peace culture.

2. Main research material

Communication (from the Latin *communicatio*, from *communico*, “make common, unite”) is a phenomenon inherent to human life (or any living being), a specific form of interaction in the process of physical or cognitive activity, the mode of transfer information about the surrounding environment; is the transmission of information from one living being to another through visual, sound, tactile, behavioral, olfactory, taste, electrical impulses [8, p. 898]. The *Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy*, define this concept as an action and effect of communicating, emphasizing that the Latin root of the term, the word *communis*, means “received and admitted of all or the greater part” [12].

There are different ways of communicating: using linguistic codes (verbally or in writing) or body, mathematical, musical languages, as well as facial expressions; through gestures, behavior; in a visual way (photos, paintings, books, written texts in general), auditory (music, voice notes, radio, audio books), audiovisual (videos, television, movies), among others.

It should be noted, that communication was the object of study mainly of sociologists, but also philosophers, linguists, economists, psychologists, mathematicians, and political scientists were interested in this phenomenon. Thus, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) contemplating communication partially and referring only to its rhetorical component, defined this phenomenon as the search for all possible means of convincing and inducing action. For him, the main goal of communication is persuasion, that is, the speaker’s attempt to lead others to have his/her point of view. He considered in the communicative act only three components: the person who speaks; the speech that is pronounced; and the person who listens [23].

In the fourteenth century, the Franciscan friar, philosopher and English scholastic logician William de Ockham (1280-1349) said that only through word, speech, communication can the individuals express their relationship with the “universal” [19].

In the XVII-XVIII centuries, the followers of psychology of the faculties of Christian Wolff (1679-1754), exposed in his work *Rational Psychology* (1734), from the distinction between the soul and the mind and different faculties of each of these (soul/mind dualism), found two independent purposes of communication: one of intellectual or cognitive (mind) nature and the other of emotional (soul). They found three objectives of communication: informative (call made to the mind); persuasive (called fact to the soul, to the emotions); and third, that served as entertainment [2].

On the other hand, a different conception of communication arises at the end of the 19th century from structuralism. Thus, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) in his work *Course of General Linguistics* (1916) perceived communication as the act of enunciating difference without inequality. For him, communication is made up of signs; a sign is what the other sign is not (in this relation the opposition or the difference of one sign with the other is pronounced). This difference with other signs speaks of its value, since no sign exists by itself, only in relation to another sign. Hence, for De Saussure, the essence of the communicative act has expressed in the formula: “my value is my difference with other/s” (Self-You relation), affirming the idea of difference without inequality [10] (see Figure 1).

In turn, the disciple of Ferdinand de Saussure the French linguist Émile Benveniste (1902-1976) in his book *Problems of General Linguistics* (1966) visualized communication as an expression of intersubjectivity or the need for the existence of the other: “I don’t exist without you, you don’t exist without me” (relationship Self-You, You-Self) [5] (see Figure 1).

Finally, following the contributions of the structuralists, the Soviet Marxist philologist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) spoke of communication as dialogue and an infinite process. For him, in the communicative act, both participants: the enunciator and the receiver participate simultaneously. The message exists, even before it is formulated, it is addressed to someone; it is anticipated and has a response character. Each message appears in the social context and demands responsibility for the other (“I give an answer = I answer for you”). This dialogism of Bakhtin supposes the impossibility of the communicative contact without the existence of the other, therefore, it foresees the inclusion of the other (his/her expectations, needs, beliefs, etc.) from the

formulation of the message: "you are part of me; I'm part of you" (Self-You-Self relationship) [4] (see Figure 1).

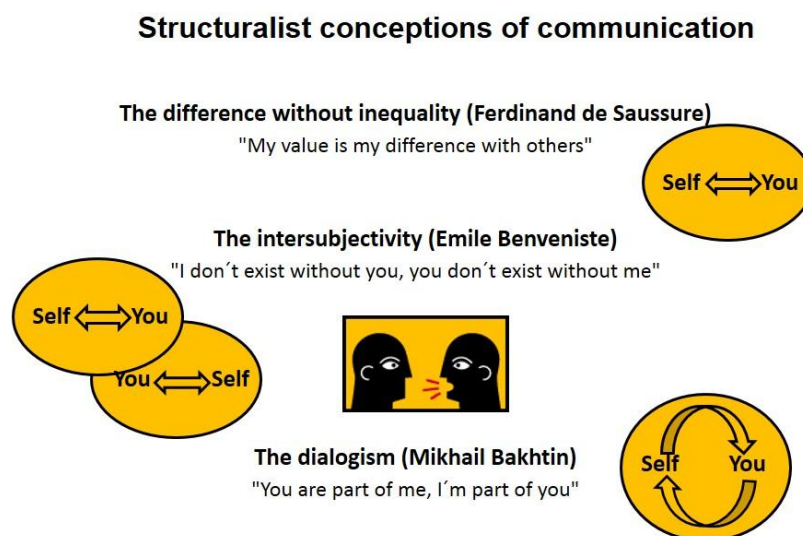


Figure 1: Conceptions of the communication phenomenon
Source: elaborated by authors.

At the beginning of the 20th century, because of the fact that the communication phenomenon was the object of study of pragmatic sociology, its new conceptualizations emerged. Thus, Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929), representative of the Chicago School and author of the first work on the modern analysis of communication *Social Organization* (1909), conceived communication not as the simple transmission of messages, but as a symbolic process, by which a culture is instituted and maintained. For Cooley, the individual "Self" is formed as a social entity only through communication. This perspective is similar to that of his disciple, pragmatic philosopher, sociologist and American social psychologist George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), whose proposal of social behaviorism privileged communication in the construction of the "Self". For Mead (1968), thought is an essentially social act, that is, it develops through and in communication with one's neighbor [20].

Likewise, for John Dewey (1859-1952), the highest representative of American pragmatism, communication was the foundation of all human relationships, the process that unites individuals and allows collective life. This great theorist strongly emphasized the role of communication in social life [11].

In turn, Donald Stewart (1894-1980) defined communication as a physical-mental process, which function is the enunciation of messages with meaning, where the receiver must express the intended meaning. For Stewart, communication is made up of psychological and physical aspects. In addition, natural signals and symbols share the same physical property, but for these signals and symbols to contribute to communication, they must be transformed into ideas and make sense for the recipient [1].

Harold Lasswell (1902-1978), functionalist political scientist, pioneer of political science and one of the founders of communicology¹, dedicated to the study of propaganda and its relation to the creation of collective attitudes, argued that a communication process between two subjects occurs when both are able to understand homogeneously the same sign that they exchange. In his article *Structure and Function of Mass Communication* (1948), Lasswell defines communication as an act, unlike later models that visualize this phenomenon as a process. He points out that this act affects not only the subjects, who communicate, but also

¹Communicology (communication sciences or studies in communication) is an interdisciplinary field of studies that analyzes social phenomena related to information and communication, as well as mass media and cultural industries, and the semiotic set that they construct, generating its own study methods and analytical tools. Its theoretical concepts are shared with other disciplines: sociolinguistics, sociology, social anthropology, cybernetics, social psychology, among others.

what they communicate, their expectations, their state of mind, their reasons to communicate, the means of communication they use, the reception conditions, the context [23].

Later, the American communications scientist Wilbur Schramm (1907-1987) stated that communicating presupposes sharing some kind of information, idea or attitude with someone. In addition, his student at the School of Journalism at the University of Illinois David Berlo (1929-1996) argued that communication is a way to influence and affect intentionally. Berlo proposed his communication model called SMCR (source-message-channel-receiver) distinguishing as a component of the communicative act the action of the transmitter and his/her strategy and intention of the receiver, as well as considering noise as one of the elements that configure the final result of the message's transmission. Berlo also believed that the message is subordinated to all the baggage possessed by the one who elaborates it (the source) and subjected to a treatment and coding having been received through the senses. Hence, each individual perceives it according to his/her communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system and culture [7].

On the other hand, Herbert Alexander Simon (1916-2001), economist, political scientist and theorist of the social sciences, pioneer in the field of artificial intelligence and laureate of the Nobel Prize in Economics (1978), pointed out that communicating is transmitting a message via a certain behavior, appealing to a code in order to condition another behavior in another subject [25].

It is important to point out that in the second half of the 20th century, conceptualizations of the communication phenomenon emerged from the critical theory and the Frankfurt School. Thus, the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (born in 1929), representative of pragmatic linguistic philosophy, created in 1981 his theory of communicative action. For him, "[...] the communicative rationality has pretensions of validity (they are exigencies of each speech): we pretend to tell the truth, we respect the cultural rules, norms, ethics, etc. - it is the ethics of discourse [...] we cannot understand social life outside of the mediations of language". According to Habermas, through the discourse, conflicts are solved by communication (not by force) [16].

In his theory, the German philosopher sees communication as part of a symbolic exchange within the context of language that occurs thanks to the interaction of the macrostructural processes of society with the microstructural processes of the subjects. The latter refer to the objectives, expectations, needs of the individuals, as well as the experiences obtained from their social relationships through the management of two rationalities: one related to the ends (strategic instrumental actions) and another communicative (communicative actions) [16].

Therefore, the analysis of the works of different authors who define the communication phenomenon shows that its conceptualization varies depending on the epistemological position of each scientist (behaviorism, structuralism, positivism, pragmatism, constructivism, critical theory, etc.). Based on the definitions studied, in this work communication is understood as a psychophysiological and social phenomenon, which execution obeys the strict rules of a system.

As a psychophysiological phenomenon, communication occurs thanks to the participation of different organs and systems of the human body (neurobiological, sensory-motor, metabolic-hormonal, anatomical-physiological, physical-acoustic, psychological). The emission and reception of sound is a consequence of the interaction of different motor, sensory and hormonal systems controlled and regulated by the central and peripheral nervous system. Physiologically speaking, the act of communication depends on several factors: the system of sensory receptors (vision, hearing, touch, vibrations, physiological barriers, etc.); the mechanism of sound emission (phonatory, resonator and facial muscle physiology); the level of development of the mental mechanisms of communication; the memory; the thought; the language, etc.

The social (cultural, semiotic) nature of communication is expressed in the fact that it is executed within the framework of a system of interaction, always pursuing an end, trying to persuade, achieve something, always taking place within the framework of the norms or values of society, following particular rules based on language (gestures, attitudes, behavior, etc.). It can occur at intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, mass levels. It is pending of several factors, in particular, the physical and emotional distance between those who communicate, the shared codes, the objective of the particular communicative act.

Also, as a system, the communicative act is organized according to a precise scheme, in which all the components are of equal importance and together they determine the quality of the process (see Figure 2). These components are: the source of information (where the information originates); the message that is any sequence of a finite set of signs; the transmitter that can be the person who emits the signals (the transmitter) with their communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system, culture; and/or the technological apparatus in charge of the emission of signals provided by the source, which constitute a message; the receiver, who receives the signals and decodes them, translating them to another system in order to understand them depending on their communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, social system, culture [26].

The communication scheme includes also the channel or physical conduit (sight, taste, touch, hearing, smell) through which the signals flow (the means of transport of the message), and which possesses a certain capacity with respect to the nature and density of the signals that circulate through it. Just as its element is the source of noise, signals unrelated to the source of information that interfere with the passage of others through the channel or reception of signals by the receiver. Other constituents are the context or set of temporal, spatial and sociocultural circumstances that allow the receiver to understand the message; the destination or end point of the transmission process.

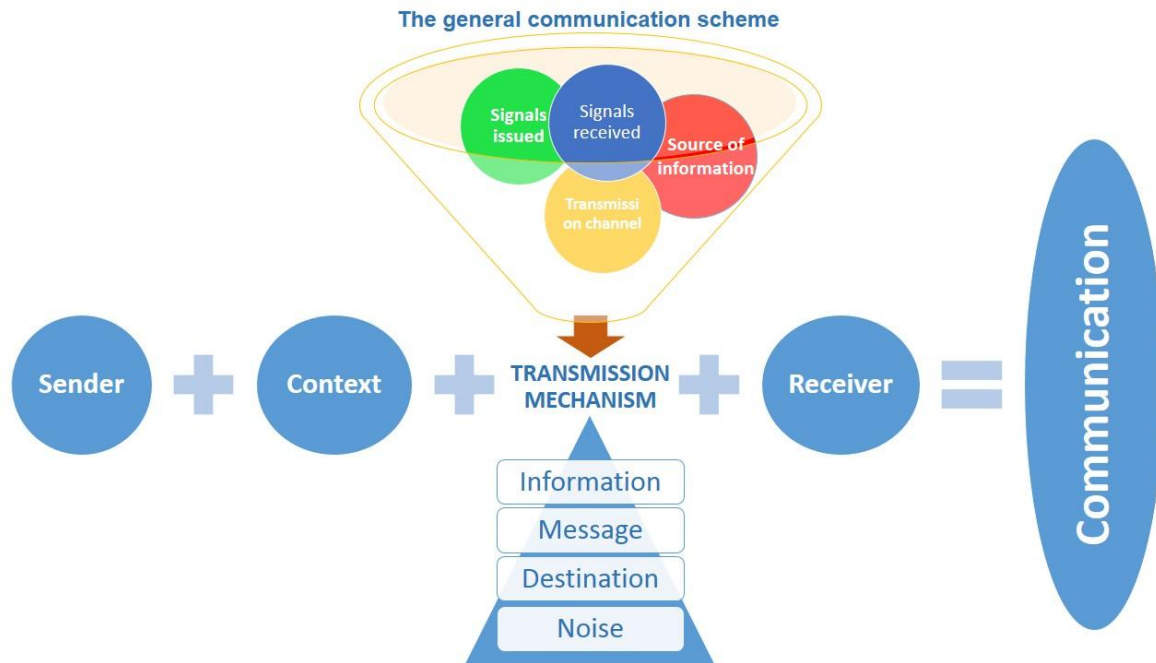


Figure 2: The general communication scheme
 Source: elaborated by authors.

It is important to point out, that the signs, of which the message composes, in most communicative acts can represent linguistic entities although not strictly, since the communicative signs don't necessarily have to constitute words, letters or phonemes. It can also be a finite set of distinguishable signs, which are united according to a certain combination (gestures, attitudes, etc.). Hence, a message characterizes by having a code, a content, a style and a certain form or treatment [25].

The instance, in which the communication creates, is the sender (or the encoder). This complex process starts in the neurobiological system of the subject with the "ideation" of what he wants to manifest (concepts, intentions, emotions, etc.). First, he/she resorts to his memory in search of the signs that constitute the ideas and represents himself the image of these ideas; then, he/she codes them into a symbol system (same that must be shared by who will receive the message). Right away, he/she chooses the source of transmission of the information and the motor order is produced. If the communication is verbal, the cerebral cortex gives the order for the words to be emitted and the message is transmitted; if it is not verbal, other orders will be given regarding the use of other signs/signals or sources of emission.

Once the source of transmission has been chosen, the sender selects the channel, through which he/she will send the coded signals (physical or technological) so that they reach a receiver who, in turn, decodes the received structure. For the message to be effective and comply with the objective of the person who issues it, it must be transmitted with a minimum of errors and have the minimum of interference (noise) in its path. In addition, it depends on different ways in which the issuer can issue or process the messages, as well as the degree of knowledge he/she has about what it transmits, the characteristics of his/her receiver, his/her own attitudes.

The receiver analyzes and "translates" the signals so that he/she obtains the idea of the message (or decodes a finite chain of signals produced by precise rules of combination from a given code). Coding and decoding depend on the culture, experience, knowledge, the socio-economic environment of the implicit actors, as well as multiple factors that make up the context and are not static. Finally, the receiver sends the feedback and the process resumes or terminates.

It should be remembered, that at the interpersonal level the communication fulfills several functions that are grouped into two types:

Expressive functions:

- *Affective* (or emotional) that serves to relate emotionally with others, manifesting feelings, affection, admiration, desires, etc.

- *Value* when the issuer gives a qualifying charge in his/her message, thanks to which the individuals can establish an image of themselves and of others.

- *Conative* (or appellative) when the issuer wants to call attention to the receiver.

- *Contact* (or phatic) that is used to establish contact or cut the communication.

- *Poetics* (or aesthetics) when looking for beauty and the oral or written message takes special care.

- *Referential* (or representative) having the purpose of describing an event objectively and focuses on the context of communication (for example, scientific language).

Utilitarian functions:

- *Persuasive* (or rhetorical) that refers to the conviction of the receiver to accept the idea, belief, attitude, behavior of the issuer under a defined purpose.

- *Denotative* (or informative) that serves to communicate data of interest and relevance to the recipient. Through this function we transmit the culture, history, experiences, etc. (we teach and we learn).

- *Regulatory* to moderate the behavior of others and facilitate their adaptation to society.

- *Entertainment* to entertain the receiver.

Likewise, at group or organizational levels, the main communication functions are the following:

- The one of *control* to monitor individual behavior. Organizations have hierarchies of authority and formal guidelines, to which institutional actors must be governed (employees, students, teachers, etc.). However, this control function also occurs in the informal communication of the actors (jokes, irregular attitude, etc.).

- The one of *cooperation* or joint solution of problems (dialogue to find enriching exits that gather the best of each point of view of the members of the team).

- The one of *information* that consists of providing the information required to evaluate the alternatives, which may arise and facilitate decision-making.

- The one of *motivation* or reinforcement of a desired behavior (clarify the goals, distribute tasks, explain how to optimize performance, praise the performance, provide feedback on the progress towards achieving the goal, encourage enthusiasm, etc.).

- The *emotional* that is expressed in the interaction with others, in the sharing of failures and satisfactions.

3. Conclusions

Therefore, the analysis of the communication phenomenon allows asserting that the domain of the communicative competence by students demands the development of the following capacities and the appropriation of such abilities and skills as:

Psychophysiological capacities:

- Own the system of sensory receptors (vision, hearing, touch, vibrations, etc.); have the mechanism of sound emission (phonatory, resonator and facial); have developed the mental mechanisms of communication, memory, thought, language, etc.

- As an issuer, know how to codify his/her ideas in a symbol system; as a receiver, know how to analyze and decode the signals received from a given code and feedback the message.

Sociocultural competences:

- Have communicative skills: speaking, writing, reading, listening.

- Know how to assume responsibilities; be precise, don't give his/her opinion in a generalized way; be transparent and act naturally; accept criticism constructively and non-destructively.

- Being an issuer know well what is transmitting, become aware of his/her own attitudes, know the characteristics of his/her receivers, considering their capabilities, needs, expectations, interests.

- Being a receiver be able to listen actively, know the characteristics of his/her receiver, be assertive, patient and tolerant.

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