

Getting closer to Cultural Studies, communication implies an exchange of points of view, if we take into consideration genuine communication, non-biased and detached from agenda-setting schemes. Even in the cultural field we are trapped in what J. Habermas called communicative actions. Culture would be blocked at the level of samizdat without being helped by communication to establish its context (Knoblauch in Luzio, Günther and Orletti 2001: 5). Thus, intercultural communication relies on rationality, especially linguistic rationality. In order to gain access to dialogue – and what is reception or hermeneutics unless genuine dialogue? –, communicators have to be able to perceive different cultures from a perspective of informed understanding (Corbett 2003: 2).

Intercultural communication analyses low-context and high-context cultures. The former are the most verbalised ones, insofar they are multicultural, cosmopolitan and deprived of a monolithic tradition. The latter are characterised mainly by the use of allusions, suggestions and indirectness, being also more metaphoric and polysemic (see Symbolic Interactionism theorized by G. H. Mead). High-context cultures are a proof of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign. Depending on various social interactions, we ascribe different meanings to things and actions. This relativistic view upon the world backs up Social Constructivism and its promotion of social expectations. Ours is a world of conventions and institutional facts matter more than brute facts. These two theories are the inheritors of Emile Durkheim's functionalism, which again stressed the importance of social facts and the wisdom of not interfering in the Other's system of values. By default, the canon is not only an aesthetic fact, but also a social one. If it results from authentic communication, then its reception will be long-lasting and impactful.

Communication theory comprises many situational instances: Interpersonal Communication, Intrapersonal Communication, Societal Communication, Mass Communication, Verbal/ Non-Verbal Communication, Digital Communication, Discursive Communication, Extrapersonal Communication, Professional Communication, and Organisational Communication. All those influence the ways in which canons are constituted. All too often, communication is lowered to the level of propaganda and as such it permeates all types of culture: corporate, age, religious, regional, and class.

Many other instances of communication are able to influence the selection for the canon. Elisabeth Marx (Breaking through Culture Shock, 1999) indicated the "transition shock" and the "experience of foreignness". Stuart Hall discussed in *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, 1973, the influence of context (high and low context cultures), directness, chronemics, proxemics, individualism, or monochronic and polychronic cultures, and collectivism. Taking the research further, G. Hofstede (*Cultures and Organisations*, 1991) considered cultural differences in terms of attitudes to past, present and future. He also recorded cultural dimensions related to short term/long term orientation, universalism and particularism, male and female projection, and the capacity to tolerate uncertainty.

It became clearer and clearer that human constructs are not only biased and ideologised, but also particularised by differences in history, mentality, traditions, religion, race, and languages. It is quite difficult to figure out an arch-canon founded on the same building principles, when languages themselves are so different. We tend to Europeanise and globalise all, fact that leads to the minimization of "uncivilized" cultures. But how can we overlook the cultured nature of some

ancient languages? For instance, in Kivunjo (Bantu language in Tanzania) a verb can add up to seven affixes; there are two moods and fourteen tenses, the verb agrees with its subject, object and benefactive nouns, whereas nouns come in sixteen genders. Such languages with sophisticated systems of courtesy and etiquette produced only oral masterpieces. Most of them disappeared during the colonialist regimes, but their high-structured systematicity should warn us about the excellence and immovability of our canons.

Interpersonal Communication relies on several modes of transmitting messages. First, communication is seen as a bowling game. This implies that the bowlers are senders, the ball is the message, the lane is the channel and its boards generate the noise. This clattering may deform the ball (message), but with a good aiming the ball hits the passive pins (the target audience) and the effect is predictable. If we take into account the empirical conditions of communication, wherein the message evolves rapidly and not completely controllable, we should be expert bowlers in order to be able to convey the desired message. The shortcoming of this theory is that it does not consider effectively the relational factors. The readership is not as passive as some pins; that is why the communicator-bowler is successful only in limited or preconditioned circumstances (elitist or subcultural works can get into such an impasse as to their reception).

Communication as Ping Pong implies that the one who “serves” has the advantage of transmitting the message; the receiver has to concentrate and anticipate, as she does not know the exact trajectory of the ball (the message). Besides, although the serve seems straightforward, the ball can take a spinning twist able to disconcert the receiver of the message-ball. This type of communication is more aggressive and implies anticipation at retort. The Ping-Pong representation of exchanging messages is limited by the fact that irrespective of the number of players, the ball to be hit remains only one. In real-life communication messages are multiple and unforeseeable. Another wrong perception is the competitiveness of the game, which is no solution for communication, as this one is not about losers and winners. Games are logical and restrictive creations of humans, whereas real-life situations are more chaotic and unreliable. But what if the building and implementation of the canon implies winners and losers, depending on extra-axiological factors?

### The Symbolic Interactionism and Uncertain Reduction Theory

As an early social constructionist, George Herbert Mead believed that our thoughts and the social context we live in are shaped through communication, namely through symbolic interaction. In *Mind, Self, and Society* he described the importance of language for the symbolic interaction. When we interact, we make use of language and gestures in order to anticipate the others' responses. In their turn, the listeners' verbal and nonverbal responses are crafted in dependence on how the speakers will react. We cannot anticipate the symbolic interaction if we do not resort to minding, which is an interior dialogue used to test alternatives, rehearse responses, and anticipate reactions before answering.

In order to achieve real communication we have to be able to take the role of the other by imagining how our interlocutor sees us. This capacity strengthens tactful approaches towards conversation. It is sufficient to place ourselves into other people's shoes in order to train our subjective self to approximate the objective self. "I" can move towards "We", towards the generalized Other. Such a composite mental image is obtainable through exposure to societal expectations and responses.

The most active way of understanding how people interpret reality is that of participant observation. The listener pretends to be ignorant of the subjects discussed, but very interested in them. In this way, the listener avoids the trap of the self-fulfilling prophecy, when we provoke statements that confirm our initial expectations.

This side of communication theory overlaps the reader-response approach. A book targets a certain public but very often this very public is missed because of a faulty empathetic approach. Authors should be better communicators than their public. The canon, too, in the end, is a negotiation with various publics. Without such a feedback, the canon simply colonizes its readers and their response will be an irritated and bored one.

Uncertain Reduction Theory, formulated by Charles Berger, can also have implications for the shaping of the canon. This theoretical construct refers to our need to increase the degree of predictability when we get into contact with new realities. Part of the canon is the result of our confirmed readings. Confirmation is strengthened by critical diagnostics, by school textbooks and by prestigious prizes. A sphere of assurance and panache is blown around our cultural preoccupation and in the end everything becomes a matter of pedigree. All items are checked, labelled and glorified. This is verifiable through the attribution theory, in conformity with which people make deductions about various realities relying upon observed behaviour. After these preliminary observations, people attribute certain characteristics to the subjects of their study. This is another step in the process of uncertainty reduction and is deeply connected with layers of prejudices.

Charles Berger formulated eight key variables in relation to the functionality of his central concept of uncertainty: verbal communication, nonverbal warmth, information seeking, self-disclosure, reciprocity, similarity, liking, and shared networks. Consequently, canon development necessitates interactivity but also hedging measures so that the values would not dissipate. Genuine communication is founded on a hierarchy of hypotheses, although the top-down distribution inside the canon is suspect.

Anxiety/uncertainty management theory has applicability in the field of canonicity too. The AUM theory describes how the high levels of uncertainty and anxiety end up in misunderstanding when parties do not communicate in an efficient way. The probability of misunderstanding intervenes when the factors involved in negotiating the canon lack mindfulness, as they are not able to think in fresh categories and to be open to new information and multiple perspectives.

Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery launched the debate upon relational dialectics. They found inspiration in Mikhail Bakhtin's considerations on the dialectical tension inside human experience and on the dialogical structure of narrative acts.

There are two types of dialectics: an internal one, developed between the parts of a network, and an external one, using the tensions created between a couple (Critic – Canon) and the context. The relational dialectics consists of interrogation-separation stages: connection – autonomy, inclusion - seclusion, and intimacy – independence. Besides, this type of dialectics includes stability – change variables: certainty – uncertainty, conventionality – uniqueness, predictability – surprise, and routine – novelty. There is also another class of relational dialectics that integrates expression – nonexpression aspects: openness – closedness, revelation – concealment, candour – secrecy, and transparency – privacy.

If we want to maintain the creation of the canon at a dialogic level, we have to strive for obtaining a flux capable of achieving aesthetic elevation. Social constructionists state that the constitutive dialogue creates and alters not only relationships, but also the entire social construction. Thus, our discussions are part of the all-comprising competing discourses, but also of the on-coming discourses. Present and future communication forms a dialectical flux which makes impossible the predictability of an issue. Nothing manages to preserve its autarchic state. This is quite normal if we admit to the spiralling inversion of the contrasting voices in a relationship: the dominant role is assumed in turns, depending on the circumstances.

Partners can resort to different tactics in order to relaunch their collaboration. One can be the segmentation, or compartmentalization, by means of which some aspects of communication are isolated and focused upon. The purpose of these approaches is the isolation of an aesthetic moment able to secure even a fleeting unity through the equilibrium of the voices involved in communication. The existence of such a revelatory level is possible only if the partners are open to critical mediation and ready to accept critiques directed towards dominant voices, when these ones reject disparate viewpoints.

### The Interactional View on communication

Paul Watzlawick dwelled on the Interactional View on communication. He formulated some master-lines in the field:

-The members of a group tacitly act in order to maintain the status quo, the homeostasis of the family.

-When the members of a group do not feel satisfied inside that structure, they justify their infelicity using the symptom strategy. The bad state is placed under the responsibility of something uncontrollable.

-The content of communication in a group is related to the what side of the verbalizing reaction.

-The way things function and evolve in a group is registered nonverbally and relies on how messages are transmitted.

-The evolution of a relationship depends on how its members know how to distinguish the cause-events from the response-events. This know-how is called punctuation and is related to metacommunication.

-Communication can be either symmetrical (balanced equation of power) or complementary (there is a dominant party).

-When one party involved in communication tries to gain the dominant position, the balance of forces moves towards one-up communication.

-When one party tries to fluidize communication by mimicking or even accepting submission, the effect will be a one-down relationship.

Watzlawick's confrontational blueprint of relationships implies the existence of an enabler, the one whose passive behaviour encourages abusive reactions from others. Paradoxically, the dominant party in a complementary relationship wants the lower-party to act in accordance with symmetrical opportunities. This subtle constraint is called the double bind.

The usefulness of the theories of communication for the explanation of canonicity is undisputable. They prove that everything in the universe comes under representations of communication. Likewise, they make explicit the complexities and obstacles that inform the process of communication. Building the canon coincides with investing continuously in communication. The impasse is that communication can be genuine – in a utopian representation – or – more often than not – fake, biased or mimicked.

### Reframing and the Social Judgment Theory

Reframing is a process of extracting content from a communicational situation and reconsidering it from the exterior. In order to modify the rules of a game, we have to take into account a whole-message model. Communication is a process characterized by equifinality, as there is no cause-effect determination in the emergence of a certain output.

According to Muzafer Sherif, a social psychologist at the University of Oklahoma, there are three latitudes of a relationship: acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment. They are triggered through a social judgment-involvement across which we assess a fact by comparing it with parallel attitudes. The health of a project depends on the latitude of acceptance in that this one is indicative of the extension of the perimeter in which a party accepts different ideas, the criteria of selection being their authenticity/aesthetic value. Identically, the amplitude of rejection maps the range of objection regarding objectionable ideas. The attitude of noncommitment, then, is dedicated to those ideas that are considered neither valuable nor negligible.

In terms of the reader's response, when persons put a high stress on their membership to a group with certain aesthetic options, they are in a situation of ego-involvement.

They may find themselves in contrast, that is not realizing that some messages fall within their latitude of rejection. Other perceptual error is assimilation, when people do not realize that some messages are far away from their attitude of acceptance and welcome them open-heartedly. Of course, confusion can be generated and the boomerang effect is possible when listeners misinterpret messages. In general, people need reference groups able to strengthen their identity.

### I.3.e. The Likelihood Model and the Discourse Ethics

The process of persuasion has central and peripheral routes. The central route consists of message elaboration by applying a scrutiny of content. The peripheral route is a more superficial way of making decisions relying only on cues and hints and not on elaborated thinking of the problem. Consequently, a message is elaborated only when somebody invests mental effort in choosing options. In order to accept such an effort, we are supposed to have accessed our need for cognition.

The success of our persuasion endeavours is often diminished by a biased elaboration. More efficient is the objective elaboration as bottom-up thinking, able to determine the real truth-value of various classifications. The last type of elaboration increases the speaker's credibility as it proves her open-mindedness.

The problem regarding the ethical formation of the canon is crucial as there are so many sources of bias. Jürgen Habermas's Discourse Ethics or the Ethical Reflection is instrumental in warding off factors of non-aesthetic influence. Habermas supported rationality worked out in a group as a method of discerning right from wrong. He considered that people belonging to a given culture or community can reach positive conclusions as a consequence of long-established traditions of dialogue and negotiation.

Habermas relied on discourse ethics and took into consideration an ideal speech situation wherein participants could rationally reach consensus regarding universal ethical standards. The philosopher encouraged a holistic perspective, much in contradiction to what the pluralistic postmodernity postulated. The utopian ideal speech situations were represented by three demanding conditions: ethical responsibility of the decision-makers, construing the discourse with a view to satisfy the common good, and the collaboration in regards to universal standards and not to exceptions advantageous only to the privileged.

Local and non-didactic canons are more predisposed to ableism, paying significant tribute to social success. The process of acculturation intervenes periodically and with the merging of cultures canons blend too. Ageism can affect the structuring of the canon. Many works of art become dated and later epochs do not find them irreproachable. For instance, some works can be banned from the canon under the accusation of chauvinism. Canons are informed by political correctness too. Even aesthetic selections are a matter of chronemics, evolving under specific temporalities.

The arch-canon needs to be as cosmopolitan as possible. But in spite of the existent lingua franca at a certain moment, cultural noise invariably influences the climate of selection. Translations are salient in this case, and they are the result of biased negotiations. Canons develop their own "languages" as they target larger or restricted categories. Lateral canons intently assume

different structuring principles in order to highlight injustice and marginalization; without aesthetic buttress, they get outdated sooner than later.

On the other hand, colonialism takes the form of enculturation. The ethos of a group is absorbed into a more central culture at a certain moment. The centre invades the peripheral canon. As in pragmatics, a certain culture attains the felicity conditions for its canon to be the most successful. The confrontation of canons (colonization and reverse colonization) moves from heterophily to interlanguages as an intermediary stage in intercultural communication.

The initial mixophobia of the central canon made more and more place to the melting pot approach. Thus, the canonizing process is ever-changing and includes, besides aesthetic/truthful contributions, ingredients that belong to various sociolects.