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Communication: Semiotic Interaction or Intersubjective Interaction?

Abstract: After considering some of the most known theories on semiotics and some of the most known theories on communication, the present approach tries to state that the semiotic and the psycho-social points of view concur in describing communication, which should be defined as semiotic interpersonal interaction. One could call communication just by one of these names, but it would be only for testing the capacity of making inferences of their auditory: semiotics means societal action – which relies on psycho-social characteristics of the humans – while intersubjective means individuals – determined by their respective subjectivity – influencing each other in their social life – which can only be achieved by the bias of behaviors interpreted as signs.

Keywords: communication; intersubjective interaction; semiotic interaction

1. The setting

The basic dualism, inscribed in the depths of our ego and which is the foundation of knowledge (and especially of Science), is the one between the self and the rest. We learn from the American mathematician and philosopher Robert Rosen (Rosen 1991) that we have the consciousness of the self through a kind of immediate apprehension and a certainty of knowledge that leaves no room for skepticism. When Descartes says "cogito", the whole spectrum of his mental activity is found in this expression: perception, cognition, ideation, will, imagination, and capacity for action. But this self-knowledge is subjective. We cannot have the experience of this knowledge the same way we have the experience of anything else, but we can still talk about

it, we can describe it. We belong to our self, we are one with it, with our perceptions, with our thoughts, with our ideas, with our imagination. Everything else is the outside world.

Then we learn (*loc. cit.*) that the second basic dualism consists of:

"the external world in its totality (ambiance), on the one hand, and what our spirit detaches from it as a system, on the other. The evolution of Science – as a tool for approaching the environment – is due to the search for particular classes of systems, meant to operate a cut in the environment. In this search, we sometimes content ourselves with detaching an individual (of course, with his universe, as far as he can see). At other times, we meet groups (smaller or larger) of associated individuals on the most diverse bases: occupation, interests, aspirations, etc. The fact that they resemble (from a certain point of view) and that they organize (more or less) gives them as systems. From the point of view of communication, they take the place of the other".

We perceive each other – or just assume each other's presence – and realize that beings like us could extract information from our behavior. This makes us always able to tune our behavior to the contexts in which we find ourselves. We don't know how to name this situation or it doesn't occur to us to find a name for it, but it's about communication (in the anthropological sense, of course, and this meaning gives value to Paul Watzlawick's axiom: one cannot not communicate). A French scholar, Dan Sperber, traces a path from anthropology to semiotics when he writes:

"We talk, we listen, we write, we read – as you are doing now – or we draw, we mimic, we nod, we point, we shrug, and, somehow, we manage to make our thoughts known to one another", and further on "The only thing that is ever produced by one person for another person to see or hear is behavior and the traces it leaves behind: movement, noise, broken twigs, ink spots, etc. These things aren't thoughts, they don't "contain" thoughts […], and yet some of these behaviors or traces serve to convey thoughts" (Sperber 1995).

Summing up, one could say that humans sign to each other – knowingly or involuntarily – and this is communication. This all is but a matter of human behaviors and of traces human behaviors leave. In order to clearly explain how this works, Dan Sperber called upon theories from sociology (the well-known theory on representations and meta-representations, created by Serge Moscovici), as well as from psychology

(the theory on our capacity of making inferences[1]). Humans rely on each other to extract sense from signs they make. And they do it all the time, which places the decision at the place of the otherness: when someone else says they understood something from our behavior, we have to accept that we've communicated. Let us now remember some definitions of communication: "a fundamental anthropological experience, which consists in exchanging / sharing something with **someone else**" (Dominique Wolton); "a discreet aspect of human activity that occurs when one intelligence acts upon the environment so that **another** intelligence is influenced [...] (I.A. Richards) or simply "putting **someone else** under symbolic influence" (Oswald Ducrot).

The highlighted terms impose the understanding of communication as something that can only be achieved in the conditions of the existence of otherness. More than this, it is not the sign maker's call, but the otherness's, most of the time.

2. Psycho-sociology of communication

"Communicate. We humans do it all the time, and most of the time we do it as a matter of course, without thinking about it" says Dan Sperber.

Sometimes we really intend to signify the others our intentions, our thoughts, in order to influence them, to share with them ideas, positions against some matters. We do it by means of signs, verbal and/or nonverbal, choosing to use codes we share with the addressee, and counting on them to extract the meaning we intend to "slip" in their minds or simply make it appear there. We hope they will make the "right" inference, and all this hope relies on the mechanism of representations and meta-representations, the inherent psycho-social foundation of communication. As mentioned, Dan Sperber discusses the theory of representations (Sperber 1995):

> "Understanding the behavior of an intelligent animal as the realization of an intention is generally much deeper and more useful than seeing it as a simple movement. But were our ancestors able to recognize each other's behavioral intentions? [...] You have to be twice as smart to

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[1] A distinction is made in Sperber's paper (see above): while when we talk of reasoning we think of an occasional, conscious, difficult, and rather slow mental activity, what modern psychology has shown is that something like reasoning goes on all the time – unconsciously, painlessly, and fast.

capture the intelligence of others. You need the ability to represent in your mind the mental representations of other beings. That is, you need the ability to maintain representations of representations, which in our jargon we call *meta-representations*".

Going deeper, we find other points of view, related to the above descriptions of communication.

By communication, says Dominique Wolton, we must see more than the simple idea of conveying; we must understand the idea that communication means the management of contradictory logics. In an open universe, where everyone has their own legitimacy to express themselves, communication consists less in "getting the messages across" and more in ensuring a minimum of cohesion between necessarily heterogeneous worldviews. To communicate means to organize the cohabitation of more or less competing and conflicting logics.

Eliseo Ver*ó*n is on the same line, claiming that any act of communication necessarily produces a connection. If the connection already exists, then each act of speech updates it (one way or another). In other words, communicating is connecting two "places" (the sender and the receiver). A sender cannot communicate without positioning himself and without simultaneously locating the receiver to which s/he is addressing, in relation to what s/he says. In the analysis of the utterance, the enunciator is at the place of the sender, and the recipient is at the place of the receiver. This "setting" of places can be found in interpersonal communication (where the enunciator is a person), and in media communication (where the enunciator is institutional). The theoretical model that can be built here is known as the *reading contract* (the term belongs to E. Verón). Echoing Paul Watzlawick, he proposes to the receiver not only a content, but also a relationship. This proposition is materialized in the text through the enunciation device, which consists in the construction of discursive beings (the enunciator and the recipient) and, on this basis, the construction of a relationship between them. As things go with any proposal, it is up to the receiver to accept it or not and this will have bearing on the success of the instance of communication.

In all of the above there are recurrent returns – explicit or not – to the issue of otherness, to the issue of organizing speeches, always paying attention to the other, the interlocutor. Even at the terminological level, there are theories in which both participants in a communication situation are called "interlocutors", suggesting that both participants have equal importance. When talking of self and otherness, we talk of intersubjectivity.

This approach also shows the dynamic and continuous nature of communication, and the importance of the recipient in communication. The receiver – unless dead, as a French author once said – is never absent in the formation of arguments, he lets the speaker understand that he "completes" them: he even participates in the creation of messages (see also Dan Sperber, cf. *supra*, note 1) with ideas from his own experience or from the predisposition of the moment and that, anyway, the argument that the speaker will choose can be judged only in terms of how it was understood by the receiver. Therefore, the argumentation must take into account the three perspectives present in any communication process: the text, the enunciator and the receiver (what is said, by who, to whom). Only together do these components give a possible image of how the argument will (hopefully) be understood. This is why the enunciator is obliged to take into account the level of shared knowledge they have (himself and the other), the personal experience gained by his interlocutor, the system of values and beliefs of the receiver and then use all this in organizing the discursive intervention, in order to ensure the success of reception, i.e. to ensure the desired reaction from the receiver.

3. Thus, the need for semiotics

Let's have first a general presentation of the matter.

Eco's *sign function* reads: „the sign is a relation". Going to the „Founder Fathers" of the modern studies on signs – Ferdinand de Saussure (1922) and Charles Sanders Peirce (Peirce 1990) – one can find two different views of this relation: (1) as a dyadic relation of two virtual objects (the idea of a sound image – *significant* – and the idea of a concept – *signified*); (2) as a triadic relation between an object, the sign representing it (or *representamen*), and the idea (or *interpretant*) which is determined by this sign. We will retain (1) as the semiologic perspective, and (2) as the semiotic perspective, each of them responsible for a distinct paradigm or methodological viewpoint of semiotics: the viewpoint of the semiology (and, later, structuralism, in the footprints of Saussure) and the semiotic viewpoint (mostly Peircean). While Saussure was foreseeing the emergence of a necessary science which would have to undertake the study of signs (all kind of signs) within the social life, Peirce had already produced the pragmaticists's manifesto and was concerned with the idea that signs are there to be used and that we should learn how to get the best of using them.

Both orientations have had their influence on how scholars started to look at language and mostly at the subjectivity in language. The structuralism and the French discourse analysis were the frame for stemming the enunciator as a subjective position in any communication instantiation. Peirce's pragmaticism added something to the Ancient Greece view on subjectivity in discourse and persuasion, making semiotics be the new understanding of rhetoric.

The radical difference between semiological and the semiotic standpoints in the field of analysis of phenomena as persuasion (cf. Martin Svantner 2016) is:

a) For semiology, "value" is determined only within the set of relations in a given system (as Saussure's linguistic signs system – *langue* – where each sign is given a value by its difference against all the other signs in the system and by its position within the system) and has no "substance", only "form"[2].

b) From the semiotic standpoint of the sign as triadic composition, "values" can be represented on one side as sign-types and on the other side as concrete realizations of them (as tokens) but also simply as signs of distinctive qualities.

It is obvious that explaining what, how and why falls under a semiotic approach. Semantics will serve to determine the reference of discourse (what we are talking about); syntax will serve to choose the most appropriate units and structures and to match them together in the most appropriate way to fit our intention of communication (i.e. it will tell us how to construct the discourse); pragmatics will serve to determine the very intention of communication, i.e. what is pursued through the produced discourse (hence, why the respective instance of discourse is engaged).

Theories about culture were based, at first, on a model-code of human communication[3], in fact, the only one at hand. Dan Sperber

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[2] Individual, specific (indexical) usage of a sign is also discussed in Saussure's *Cours de lingistique générale* under the concept of *parole*, which is what the linguist called the linguistic acts.

[3] It has often been said that the whole culture is communication. The basis of such an opinion is the finding that all aspects of culture can be studied as simple contents of semiotic activity (cf. U. Eco 1982). This does not mean reducing culture to simple mental events, but the fact that one can better understand and study culture – in general, but also under certain particular aspects – by approaching it from a semiotic perspective. Umberto Eco points out a fact that is hard to dispute: "Since people communicate, explaining what, how and why they do this today is tantamount to determining how and why they will communicate tomorrow". Communication is always determined by a cultural model, which materializes in a representation of the otherness. What

(Sperber 1996) proposes an attempt to construct an inferential theory of culture. But, even in such an approach, it is acceptable to apply a certain version of the code model. Semiotics could help. As Kennedy said, "rhetoric in the sense of techniques of persuasion is a phenomenon of all human cultures, and analogies to it are also found in animal communication. All communication involves rhetoric. A speaker or writer has some kind of purpose, and rhetoric includes the ways of accomplishing, or attempting to accomplish, that purpose within a given culture" (Kennedy 1999, *apud* Svantner 2016).

Here is what S. Levinson writes about it: "[...] only a very restrictive definition of pragmatics would draw a boundary between socio-linguistics and pragmatics. [...] Indeed, pragmatics and socio-linguistics have in common many areas of interest, and socio-linguists have contributed much to certain pragmatic areas. [...] However, pragmatics, on the other hand, has many contributions to socio-linguistics; in trying to understand the social significance of language use patterns (paradigms), it is essential to understand the emphasis on structural properties and processes that constrain verbal interaction" (Levinson 1983, 374).

In his *Limbaj şi ontologie* (eng.: *Language and Ontology*), resuming ideas supported by L. Wittgenstein, K.O. Apel, C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, but also ideas of O. Ducrot and J.R. Searle, Alexandru Boboc states: As a "science of human sign-mediated behavior," semiotics can be considered essentially pragmatic, of course, through its mediating and finalizing position in the application of the semiotic approach. By "semiotics" we can and must "understand the operational rules of logical syntax and the rules of meaning and truth of logical semantics as a final determined regulation of human behavior". And this originates not only in Peirce and Morris, but also in "Wittgenstein II", the concept of "meaning-use", which refers to the context of communication and, inevitably, to human behavior. Hence the interaction with psychology (individual and

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characterizes personal experience, as well as that of the society as a whole, is how to define the rules of communication. Hence the purpose of education: to teach each individual the necessary rules to come into contact with otherness. The organization of social relations and representations is recognized through communication. In the relationship of exchange/sharing with otherness, attention must be paid to cultural contradictions. These should not be mistaken for the socio-political contradictions; they are those contradictions that have their source in the different ways of seeing and thinking, the different ways of perceiving life and the world around us, as well as in the differences of meaning, especially in terms of symbols and representations.

social), with the theory of action and, last but not least, with phenomenology (analysis of intentionality)" (Boboc 1987, 136).

If the above are not sufficient arguments for such an approach, we call upon another important name, George Steiner. In his book, *After Babel. Aspects of language and translation,* in the chapter on cultural topologies, the author writes: "… translation as such, interpretation of verbal signs in one language through verbal signs in another is a special, superior case of the process of communication and reception in any act of speech". And further on:

> "The discipline […] of semiology addresses every imaginable environment and system of signs. It states that language is just one of the many communication mechanisms – graphic, acoustic, olfactory, tactile, symbolic; […] The life of the individual and of the species depends on the rapid and / or correct reading and interpretation of a range of vital information. There is a vocabulary, a grammar, maybe even a semantics of colors, sounds, smells, tissues and gestures, as complicated as those of language, and the problems of deciphering and translating them can be as difficult as those that I met [in the linguistic field, our note, DSS]" (Steiner 1983).

In the following section, some of the most representative moments of the evolution of studies from syntax to pragmatics will be reviewed, passing, of course, through semantics. Presentations of some theories will appear, but there will also be just evocations, only, of some names of those who interest us less in the present study. We know that, for a long time, the position of prime interest in syntax in the description of language seemed indisputable. The shift of interest to semantics disturbed the order of things, as semantics had been only an "appendix" of syntax, necessary only to settle questions of normalization of form, when the syntax was not able to solve it alone. Semantics brings with it, however, a new component: pragmatics. And this, because of the shift in emphasis to the question of meaning.

There were researchers in the field of logical semantics (from Frege, to Russell, Wittgenstein, Hintikka, Lewis and others), for whom the discussion was only about universes of faith, about conditions of truth, about the analyticity of statements. Along with this kind of approaches, the theory of Robert Martin came. It is the theory which introduces the difference between the conditions of truth (of the sentence) and the value of true or false (of the statement); by contrasting the phrasal function and the discursive function of language, Martin makes a clear

distinction between semantics and pragmatics (Martin 1975). This theory came into the footprints of Émile Benveniste (Benveniste v. I 1966; v. 2 1974), who was the first to talk about the necessity to distinguish between the linguistics of the language (fr. *langue*, as opposed to *parole*, linguistic acts, in Saussurian linguistics) and the linguistics of the enunciation.

In parallel, a step forward is made through the theory of intentional pragmatics. The concept of presupposition, introduced by Strawson, will allow Austin to emphasize the subjective component of language (Austin 1962; 1991). Thus, the truth conditions of those of logical orientation will be replaced by conditions of happiness. Following in the footsteps of Austin's "do by saying", John R. Searle highlights the illocutionary force of a propositional content, drawing the distinction between objective and subjective (details, here, below).

Paul H. Grice (Grice 1989), then Sperber and Wilson (Sperber & Wilson 1995) are in the same trend, proposing a kind of approach between descriptivism and ascriptivism, close to cognitivism: it is the view that presents language as capable of providing the basis for an inferential process, based on the implicit. Grice describes strategies that allow us to discover information communicated intentionally, by default. The implicit content conveyed by the statement is called *implicature* and is the basis of a construction centered on the principle of cooperation in conversational communication interactions. The implicatures are of two types: conventional and conversational, the latter being those based on contextual assumptions and cooperative relationships established between interlocutors.

Basically, we have the distinction between the natural meaning (of the linguistic content put in the discourse) and the non-natural meaning (that of the speaker), where the presuppositions hold an important place. The principle of cooperation, refined into conversational maxims (concerning four categories, similar to Kant's categories: quantity, quality, modality and relationship) is made not only of rules to be followed by the speaker, but also of references based on which the interlocutor can reach the communicated implicature.

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson propose a theory of relevance, which can be recognized as related to the principle of cooperation (Grice), but which has been explicitly presented as a substitute for that theory. In short, a sentence P is relevant in a context C if and only if P has at least one contextual implication in C. Contextual implication is a type of logical implication that leads to a certain conclusion starting from some premises. The premises are extracted from P + C and never only from P, or only from C.

The principle of relevance, postulated in this theory, stipulates that any act of communication presupposes the intention of maximum relevance. The relevance of a sentence in a context will be greater the greater the number of its contextual implications and the less effort required to derive them from its enunciation. We are not talking, here, about a rule, but about a constitutive property of any act of communication. The ostensible and inferential mechanism of human communication is explained by the fact that there is a behavior that shows the speaker's intention to achieve something by what he says, and, at the interlocutor place, one could notice an inferential behavior, i.e. the inclination to infer, based on assumptions in speech, what he expects the speaker to want him to understand as recipient.

4. Semiotics and linguistics: speech signs and their use

In the following, we propose a number of differentiation exercises, according to various criteria, between possible utterances that have as linguistic support phrases / texts, more or less common, more or less "normal". The examples are inspired by Jean-Claude Milner's book, *Introduction à une science du langage* (Milner 1989).

Let us consider, first, Pascal's phrase:

"Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie"[4]

compared to the anti-phrase created by Paul Valéry:

"Le bavardage intermittent de nos petites sociétés me rassure"[5].

Of course, French-speaking readers did not have to resort to the translation in the footnote to decode the two sentences. And again, of course, the utterance of one or the other of them will have a different effect in front of the same audience, or, otherwise, one of them will have to be preferred to the other in front of a given audience, to avoid misunderstanding the content, offending the audience or other practical shortcomings. It would not be polite, for example, to utter Valéry's anti-phrase in the midst of a group of friends, intellectuals, interesting in what they do / know / say. On the other hand, it would not make sense to utter Pascal's phrase in the company of 4-5 year old children or in front of

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[4] Eng.: The eternal silence of those infinite spaces scares me.
[5] Eng.: The intermittent chatting of our small societies reassures me.

uneducated people, preoccupied exclusively with discussions on topics in fields of application, strictly practical.

Another example we propose is the famous Chomskyan phrase, by which the renowned American philosopher intended to exemplify, in the late fifties of the last century, the independence of syntax from semantics:

"Colorless green ideas sleep furiously".

The first issue that can be discussed, as in the previous examples, is that only English speakers could understand the words that make up the sentence, without resorting to the translation in a dictionary. Secondly, it is noteworthy that both native English speakers and others could not say that they understood anything other than words. Not the phrase. The meaning of the words is within our reach, but the meaning of the phrase escapes our reason. It seems that the example chosen by Noam Chomsky is perfect to support his opinion: one can construct a sentence that is perfect from a syntactic point of view, but that is null from a semantic point of view. We say "it seems", because things haven't stayed that way for more than half a century. Some twenty-five years ago, researchers in the field of language have had again a look of the famous phrase and found that, with the evolution of the social-cultural context, the strange phrase seems to say something. The emergence of the environmental movement (in the early 1960s), followed by the nickname of its members as "greens", means that, nowadays, something "green" is understood as something that belongs to the "greens", i.e. environmentalists. Under these new conditions, "green ideas" may be the ideas of environmentalists. "Colorless" suits them insofar as someone presents them, critically, as devoid of substance, of interest, as weak. Moreover, if these pale ideas of the environmentalists are not presented to the right people, they are not sufficiently promoted, it can be said that they "sleep". They sleep, but the frustration felt by those to whom they belong makes them "sleep with anger." This is how the change of context – unsuspected at the time of the launch of the famous phrase – would lead to the possibility of finding it "meaningful", of course with a meaning expressed in a metaphorical way.

The questions that arise related to the understanding of the above examples can be formulated only regarding the use of (verbal) signs by various speakers, in various contexts, in various situations of verbal interaction (i.e. in communication). Constructions can be appreciated / discussed from perspectives such as: that of the correctness of the

composition of sentences (syntax), that of the meaning of sentences (semantics) or that of the effect pursued / obtained by enunciating the sentences (pragmatics). We must no longer argue in favor of the obvious relationship between semiotics – seen as a scientific approach – and understanding communication – seen as a field of application.

It seems obvious that we cannot avoid the relation between the approach of communication as a subject of study and the approach of semiotics as an instrument. And this, because we relate to the definition given by Peirce to semiotics (the doctrine of nature and the fundamental varieties of any possible semiosis), and this, related to the definition given by Ferdinand de Saussure (We can therefore imagine a science which would undertake the study of the life of signs within the social life of humans).

Going back to the above quoted work of Alexandru Boboc, we read:

> "In fact, the unity of speech-action-thought, against the background of a functional preeminence (in knowledge and communication) of pragmatics, actually illustrates the so-called "pragmatic turn" in contemporary thought (realized in logic, science theory, social theory, philosophy and so on). It should be noted that this preeminence cannot be universalized: one can speak of universal pragmatic aspects, even of the "pragmatic paradigm", but a reductionism (as a form of pragmatism) is not desirable. For the unity of the three dimensions in semiotics is essential, in which the function-sign is characterized, first of all, by meaning and interpretation, conditions of the realization of the discourse, of its shaping for the impact in action and communication" (Boboc 1987, 136).

Syntax and semantics, regarded as possibilities for variations in language use, should also be discussed.

Variations in language in communication are not an effect of chance. Linguistic variation must be correlated with a series of situational constraints. The ability to make appropriate language choices, depending on the requirements of the situation is part of the speaker's communicative competence. Just as we choose our clothes differently to go to the theater, to a match, to a funeral, or to a picnic, so we must know how to choose our words and wording in different circumstances. We are not only talking about a conditioning coming from social conventions, but also about the requirements imposed by a given situation and which are assessed in relation to the expectations that the speaker suspects to be of his audience.

5. Theories

Hence, the idea of presenting, in short, some of the semiotic theories that seem to support our discussion of the pragmatic approach to the study of language and its use.

Charles Morris and semiotics

Charles Morris claimed that semiotics is the science that results from the study of the three dimensions of the meaning and the interrelationships between them (Morris 1946). A science that would have the role of a *novum organon* for science and for the philosophy of scientific empiricism. To understand this definition, we must understand how the American philosopher invites us to think about meaning (as related to the sign). For Morris, signs maintain three types of relationships:
1. with objects
2. with people
3. with other signs.

The study of the first category of relationships is handled by specialists in natural sciences and empiricists; the study of the second category is handled by pragmatists, specialists in social sciences, biology, psychopathology; linguists, logicians, mathematicians deal with the study of the third category of relations. But each group of the mentioned specialists has access to only one dimension of meaning:
1. to the existential dimension
2. to the pragmatic dimension
3. to the formal dimension

Then, the meaning must be seen as the result of putting the three dimensions together.

One can start investigating the meaning of any of them, but none can be left aside, ignored, "hidden". To think of meaning, according to Morris, is to construct a complex model of things we have experienced — often, themselves, elements of a linguistic structure — that we can use to guide people about certain objects for which those things have become functional substitutes. It can be concluded, therefore, that for Morris, meaning is not an entity (subsisting or existing), but a functional relational complex. In addition, despite the personal aspect of the experience of meaning, we must think of meaning as potentially intersubjective (given that even personal experience involves

intersubjective social aspects: thinking is revealed in the natural process of adjusting the individual to society and the environment).

Returning to the definition of semiotics, we easily understand the existence of the tripartition in semantics, pragmatics and syntax. From an empirical and existential point of view, the object of semiotics is the process of meaning; from a pragmatic point of view, intersubjectivity is studied, because it decides on the infinite number of different uses of a corpus of signs, and from a formal point of view, the object of semiotics is the system of symbols (having a syntactic structure, capable of an axiomatic presentation).

The Morrisian tripartite vision is reminiscent of Peirce's, while evoking the association that the latter proposes between logic and semiotics. "Logic, says Peirce, in its general sense, is just another name for semiotics, which is the quasi-necessary or formal doctrine of signs. Giving this doctrine as quasi-necessary or formal, I also think of observing the characteristics of signs which we know and that, starting from here, through a process that I will not hesitate to call Abstraction, we arrive at eminently fallible statements and, therefore, in a way, not at all necessary, about what must be the characteristics of all the signs used of a "scientific" intelligence, in other words, of an intelligence capable of extracting science from experience" (Peirce 1990).

Charles Morris's pragmatic point of view is expressed more succinctly and clearly in *Logical positivism, pragmatism and scientific empiricism.*

> "«Mine»", says Morris, "makes sense only in opposition to «yours» that is, only if there is a social or common dimension of experience; otherwise, the notion of individual experience makes no sense. The primary situation for observation is a field in which the self (individual) is at the same level of immediacy with other selves (individuals) and with physical things. The other selves are not completely given, but that does not mean that they are not really given. In such a field, certain contents (data, meanings, truths) come to be referred to the self as personal or subjective, while others are established as common goals" (Morris 1937).

Pragmatism began as an empirical theory of meaning, and the thesis on the question of meaning would be formulated as follows: when "meaning" is used with the meaning of "signified" and not of "significance", the meaning of anything is identical with the set of expectations the presence of something raises.

Here again, Morris meets Peirce, who states: "If one can accurately define all phenomena that can be conceived experimentally and which may

involve the assertion or denial of a concept, that one will have a complete definition of the concept and there is nothing left in that".

The pragmatist (of the Morrisian type) would say (cf. Morris 1946):

"find what you expect when you use a concept and you will have the full meaning of that concept. Before being postulated theoretically, communication is observable empirically: I can observe that you expect what I do by using words and that the object that satisfies my expectations satisfies you. Through the process of communication, meanings – and many would say «knowledge» – take on a social dimension (of course, especially scientific knowledge), and to have thought and manifest oneself verbally means to act on a world larger than the given one (we accept the reports of others about what is beyond the field in which we alone can verify the meanings and truths, or this acceptance is a verbal matter)".

Starting from any primary semiotic situation, the signs are revealed to us as dependent on: modality (they are not produced by the receiving organism), receptor (denotation and meaning differ according to the action impulse of the receptor), situation (action dispositions produced by the receptor differ depending on the situation), function (triggers a subsequent phase of the receiver's action only in the case of a continuous action chain). This Morissian view of semiotic situations can take us back to Roman Jakobson's model of communication, where the elements are called differently, but each is attributed the important position it has in the act of communication (Jakobson 1960; 1964).

Based on the hitherto mentioned in Charles Morris's semiotic theory, we will emphasize the two important points of this theory, in order to preserve its clarity and to reveal its importance from the point of view we support (the approach to communication from a semiotic perspective is more than justified). These two points are:
1. Morris distinguishes in signs two dimensions, the meaning and the use and
2. Morris claims that what gives the meaning of a sign is the dominant tone of its use.

At the level of the performer, there is a difference between the signs depending on the role they have in each phase of the action. Thus, one can distinguish designative signs, prescriptive signs and appreciative signs. Developing a theory of ascriptors (each consisting of an identifier accompanied by a designator, a prescriber, and an appraiser), Morris raises the issue of interpreting complex signs and argues that it is

important to give different relevance to the interpreters of component signs. The solution of the question of complex signs is, therefore, the realization of a hierarchy, following that the ensemble will be interpreted according to the dominant one.

Considering the dimensions of use, Morris asks us readers to recall that the sign consists of the meaning (these are the properties that the object must possess in order to be denoted by the sign) and the interpreter (which is the behavioral disposition with which the receiver must react to understand the sign). The semiotic process triggered by the symbols is independent of the action of the receiver, which allows the sign maker to use them in order to achieve their goals.

Reflecting on all this, it can be concluded that there may exist other ways to achieve the same goals, but the chosen ways – shorter and simpler, perhaps – would not have been as effective. We understand that we are talking about the "use" of a sign when a person uses it as a means to achieve a goal. As in the case of the meaning, Morris distinguishes three dimensions of use. The communicator may use the following signs:
1. for the interpreter to be informed about the properties of the object (informative use);
2. for the interpreter to improve in some way the processing properties of the object (injunctive use);
3. for the interpreter to appreciate in a certain way the satisfying properties of the object (evaluative use).

It is not appropriate in all situations to use signs that refer directly to the qualities of the objects (qualities that satisfy the agent's impulse and which interest the sender of the signs). It is often preferable to opt for what Morris calls the secondary use of signs. In such cases, for example, to a question such as "What to do?" the answer is "What it is", as a secondary use, based on inferential processes.

Such deductive processes are based on the secondary use of signs, from simple ascriptors to whole texts.

However, when such a situation arises when direct adherence of signs to reality is resorted to, Morris speaks of the primary use of signs. Then, the designator is used informatively (answers questions such as "What object is this?"), the prescriber is used injunctively (answers questions such as "What to do?" or "What not to do?"), and the appreciator is used to evaluate (answers questions such as "How good is the object?").

Focusing on the dimension of meaning, use, and value, Ch. Morris's theory shows the agent how to act appropriately to satisfy his impulses, how to explain his preference for a certain dimension of value,

how to organize the action impulse not to conflict with his peers. This theory is not a prescriptive-normative grammar and is not a normative ethic; Morris's ethics is a situational ethic, which advocates the use of all the data of experience in the construction of semiotic theory: the external perspective, as well as the internal perspective; personal experience as well as collective experience. Morris introduced a semiotic natural point of view: objective relativism, seeking the unification of all theoretical and practical perspectives on human action.

6. A view of semiotics by Michel Foucault

In the second chapter of *Les mots et les choses* (entitled *La prose du monde*), Michel Foucault (Foucault 1966, 32) makes a remarkable construction, which leads to an "inevitable" understanding of the content of semiotics as a science. We will follow the realization of this construction, which begins with an explanation of the position of similarity in Western science and culture. With reference to the 16th century, Foucault recalls that the semantic plot of the resemblance was extremely rich: Amicitia, Aequalitas (contractus, consensus, matrimonium, societas, pax et similia), Consonantia, Concertus, Continuum, Paritas, Proportio, Similitudo, Conjunctio, Copula (cf. P. Grégoire, *Syntaxeon artis mirabilis*, Cologne 1610, 28, *apud* Michel Foucault 1966).

Of all of them (the above and many more), Foucault favors four, which he considers essential. There are four figures which prescribe their connections with the knowledge of resemblance[6]. These are as follows.

Convenience. This term refers to the proximity of places rather than similarity. Things are "convenient" that, when they approach each other, end up juxtaposing (their edges touch each other, the end of one designating the beginning of another). Through this, movement, influences, passions, properties are communicated. The resemblance appears in this combination of things. In this natural container that is the world, neighborhood is not an external relationship between things, but the sign of an at least obscure kinship. And then, from this contact, new similarities arise in exchange: the similarity as the deaf reason of the neighborhood is superimposed by a similarity which is the visible effect of proximity. In the vast syntax of the world, different existences adjust to

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[6] The following presentation will keep close to Foucault's very words (not just a translation of the original, but very close to that). This option of ours is founded in the idea that philosophical texts, when used as arguments, should be kept as close as possible to the original, rhetoric, metaphorical expression.

each other: the plant communicates with the animal, the earth with the sea, man with everything around him. Place and similarity overlap. Convenience is the similarity of space in the form of "from close to closer". It is of the order of conjunction and adjustment. That is why it belongs less to things and more to the world in which they are found. The world is the universal convenience of things.

Aemulatio. It is a kind of convenience, but at a distance, ignoring the law of the place. It is a contactless resemblance. There is something of the reflection in the mirror in emulation: through emulation things scattered throughout the world answer; through it, things can be imitated from one end of the earth to the other, without chain or proximity. However, the emulation does not leave inert the two reflected figures it opposes. It "goes across" spaces in the universe, but these spaces remain visible.

Analogy. Old concept in which convenience and aemulatio overlap. These are similarities at a distance but have adjustments, connections and articulations. The power of analogy is immense, for it does not deal with the visible similarities of things. Starting from the same point, it can lead to an infinite number of relatedness situations and can also return to itself. Versatility and reversibility provide analogy with a universal field of application: through it, all the figures of the world can approach each other. But there is a privileged point in space, a point saturated with analogies, a point where relationships can be reversed without altering: the man. At this point, the grid through which we allow the figures of resemblance to reach our knowledge intersect that which the knowledge of the sixteenth century had arranged in things.

Sympathy. It plays its game in complete freedom in the depths of the world. It can cover the widest spaces in an instant. It does more than rise from a contact and traverse spaces. It arouses the movement of things in the universe and causes the farthest ones to approach. It embodies the principle of mobility. By attracting things to each other through an external and visible movement, it secretly evokes an internal movement, a displacement of qualities. Sympathy transforms: being an instance of Identity, it is not just one of the forms of Similarity. It has the dangerous power to assimilate, to make things identical with one another, to mix them, to nullify their individuality, that is, to make them foreign to what they were. Sympathy alters, but in the direction of the identical, in such a way that, if its power were not counterbalanced, the world would be reduced to a point, to a homogeneous mass, to a sad figure of the Identical. But it is compensated by the twin figure, the antipathy. This keeps things in isolation and prevents assimilation. The sovereignty of the sympathy-antipathy couple gives rise to

all forms of resemblance. Thus, the first three similarities are repeated and explained. The whole volume of the world, all the neighborhoods of convenience, all the echoes of aemulation, all the chains of analogy are sustained, maintained and doubled by this space of sympathy and antipathy that always brings things closer and always keeps them at a distance. By this game, the world remains identical: the similarities continue to be what they are and they continue to resemble each other. The identical remains identical and closed on itself.

We now try to have a look, along with Michel Foucault, of his concept of *signatures*. This presentation, like the precedent, keeps very close to the very words of the author here evoked.

Convenience, aemulatio, analogy and sympathy show us the ways of resemblance and where these ways pass. They don't show us the resemblance where it is, nor how we see it, not even after what mark we can recognize it. Hidden similarities must be pointed out on the surface. A visible mark of invisible analogies is needed. The resemblance is the most obvious and at the same time the most hidden of things. It is a similarity that is seen or not seen, and this is why it would be a doubtful sparkle if there were not – in it or on it or next to it – an element of decision that would turn it into certainty. There is no resemblance without a signature. The universe of the like can only be a marked world, claims Foucault. Knowing the similarities is based on revealing and deciphering these signatures. The signature system overturns the relationship between the visible and the invisible. The resemblance was the invisible form of that what, from the depths of the world, made things visible, but for this form to reach the light a visible figure is needed. That is why the face of the world is covered with heraldry, characters, numbers, obscure words. The huge calm mirror in the bottom of which they mirrored things and sent their images to each other, is actually full of the sound of words. Silent reflections are doubled by words that indicate them.

To sum up, we could notice that the similarities require a signature, because none of them could be noticed if they were not legibly marked. But what are these signs? How do we recognize them among all aspects of the world and among so many intersecting figures? What tells us that we have a character that we would do well to dwell on because it indicates a secret and essential resemblance? What form is the sign in its singular sign value?

Well, the resemblance.

The sign signifies insofar as it bears a resemblance to what it indicates. However, it is not a homology that it signals, but another

similarity, another kind of a neighboring similarity that serves to recognize the first similarity but which can be distinguished, in turn, by a third. Any resemblance receives a signature. The multitude of marks causes another circle to slip on the circle of similarities, which would double the first one if there were no small gap to make the sign of sympathy stand in analogy, that of analogy in aemulation, that of aemulation in convenience, that of convenience in sympathy. The signature and what it designates are of exactly the same nature. The form which signs and the signed form are similarities, but similarities by proximity (cf. Foucault 1966).

7. Discourse analysis by Oswald Ducrot

Saussurianist as initial orientation and as directions he takes in founding the theories in the philosophy of language that he practices, the French linguist can also claim to be from the line of analytical philosophy of language (from the Oxford School, with J. Austin, and from JR Searle, especially), as well as from the grammar of the utterance, as announced by Emile Benveniste. In short, the major concern we find in Ducrot's research would be included in the theory of discursive argumentation. Explainable in what we call the logic of language or natural logic, the theory of discursive argumentation aims to study the statements that can be uttered in a language because common sense at work in a given society and in a given era holds them as plausible. The study of argumentation is related, as we said, to the logic of language, that amount of internal determinations of discourse that make the utterances in a language have meaning in the very fact that they are uttered. It is not the truthfulness of the facts presented in the discourse that matters, but only the truth as conveyed by the discourse[7].

The discourse aims at the effectiveness of the utterance, not at learning the truth, the value of the argument exceeding the informative one. Note: discursive argumentation should not be confused with persuasion. The first is an internal hypothesis (certain linguistic segments – connectors and linguistic operators – must be described by their argumentative effect), while persuasion is about observation, experience (hence, hypotheses external to discourse).

In the constructions he proposes, Oswald Ducrot starts from the distinction between utterance and phrase. A phrase is an abstract, purely

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[7] Here, Ducrot's theory meets Jürgen Habermas who states that the truth value of an utterance relies on the very fact that the speaker uttered it (Habermas 1991).

theoretical linguistic entity, a set of words combined according to the rules of syntax. On the other hand, the utterance – a certain utterance of a sentence – is what a speaker produces, what a listener hears. We communicate through utterances and not through sentences, and linguistic communication is marked by subjectivity and intentionality, or these observations lead to the fundamental postulate of the theory of discursive argumentation: the activity of argumentation is coextensive with the activity of speech (the infinite number of the Saussurian *parole*); to argue means to speak and one cannot speak without arguing.

By introducing the idea that the language is fundamentally gradual and dynamic, the linguistics that Ducrot proposes becomes a source of hypothetical strategies for the approach of discourse – construction / deconstruction of discourses. The theory of language argumentation is based on the idea that words, when they "claim" to represent or characterize things, have, in fact, a fundamentally argumentative value. They are entities of language – therefore virtual realities – but also concrete realities of discourse. Starting from here, we will say that speech has argumentative value when it characterizes the object in that it indicates the possibility (or impossibility) of other words to do it in the same way regarding that object. Akin to the theory of language acts of Austin and Searle, Ducrot argues that any statement has a fundamental interactive function. In other words, any statement counts as the performance of an act of language and is only representative in a derived manner (the representation of the world is derived from the act of language). We are in the presence of an integrated pragmatics (or intentional semantics) that defines the meaning of a statement by referring to the intentions displayed linguistically, openly, by the speaker.

Based on the above, one can understand by "the argumentative force of a statement" its orientation, that orientation which lets the others perceive the speaker's intention and which we also know as "meaning". According to the theory developed by the French linguist, we could have three possible definitions for what would be the conclusion sought by an argument. As an expression of the semantic content of the phrase, the conclusion could be: (1) a possible continuation of the phrase P; (2) what intentionally targets P; (3) however, it may simply be a conclusion supported by P.

Ducrot's discourse analysis starts from the assumption that we can make any speech make place to one or more interpretations. In the view of the invoked author, to say "this discourse means x", we must know that x is an entity expressed in discourse, but which is not itself a discourse.

To interpret a discourse D means to find an x about which we can claim – relying on the totality of the linguistic material of the discourse D and on the situation of the discourse – that D means x. The unfolding of the interpretation of a discourse has three successive phases: (1) the determination of the linguistic material of D (words, syntactic relations); (2) finding the dictionary description of this material, i.e. assigning a value to the linguistic material itself, independent of the situation of discourse; (3) putting into action the meaning within the situation of discourse, in order to get, through this interaction, the determination of the meaning of D in that specific situation where it is produced.

How does it work?

(1). Based on internal hypotheses, the discourse is broken down into a series of segments (statements) and the linguistic component of each statement (i.e. the sentence) is determined.

(2). The meaning of each word is determined through semantic analysis and then, by synthesis, the meaning of the sentence is determined, i.e. the linguistic content of the statement. This is a determination that is made at a strictly linguistic level, independent of any concrete use of the phrase.

(3). By introducing in the equation the data from the situation of discourse, the meaning of each statement comes to light; then, using a discursive synthesizer (which operates on the value of the discursive connectors), the meaning of the entire discourse D is determined.

As the general rule would be that the analysis of a statement from a speech requires the re-reading of the previous statement, whose interpretation is integrated into the interpretation of the following, the theory could be improved by introducing the meaning of each statement in the description of the next one's (in the given situation of discourse), as well as by trying to quantify the way each statement contains kind of an anticipating scheme that seems to impose a certain reading of the next one.

Starting, as mentioned before, from Emile Benveniste's research as well, Ducrot also introduces the theory of polyphony in uttering, stating that the meaning of an utterance is like a theater stage where different abstract voices or points of view called *enunciators* crystallize, directed by a speaker (the physical producer of the statement), likely to maintain with all the enunciators different degrees of relations, which the auditor must identify.

The polyphony of utterances and the theory of topoi allow a vertical description of utterances, thus devoid of any relation to reality. Subjectivity becomes the very foundation of language.

8. Speech Acts: The Vision of John R. Searle

To summarize, briefly, the theory of language acts in Searle's formulation, we shall recall that this theory was first developed by John Austin, a prominent representative of the Oxford School, famous in the field of analytical philosophy (in fact, an analytical philosophy of natural language – "Ordinary Language Philosophy"). According to Austin, "any discourse on the use of words is inaccurate and too unsystematic"; well put, the problem would be limited to answering the question "what can a man do with a certain expression?". Taking over the findings of John Austin, John R. Searle sees the interlocutors (i.e. those engaged in a verbal interaction) as a locutor (L) and an addressee (A) and adds: since L states an expression P in the presence of A, through the literally statement P, L preaches, effectively and undeniably, P in relation to an object X, if and only if:

1. the normal conditions of departure and arrival are met (we have here a clear reference to communication);
2. the statement of P appears inside the statement of an equivalent discourse segment, T;
3. the statement of T constitutes (or pretends to constitute) the fulfillment of an illocutionary act (according to a certain illocutionary mode, which is determined by the marker process of illocutionary force, contained in the sentence);
4. the statement of T implies an effective reference to X (because, for L to predict an expression about an object, it must have actually referred to that object);
5. X belongs to a category or type, so it is logically possible that P is true or false about X;
6. L intends to raise, by T's statement, the question of P's truth or falsity about X;
7. L intends to convey to A the idea that P's statement raises the question of P's truth or falsity about X, leading A to recognize his intention (and his intention is for this recognition to be effected by virtue of the knowledge that A has about the significance of P;
8. the rules governing P are such that P is used correctly in T if and only if conditions 1-7 are satisfied.

The understanding of the above would be much facilitated by reading the rules taken into account, which are: the rule of propositional content (i.e. the one that highlights the content of each illocutionary act), the so-called "preliminary" rule (i.e. the one that explains the situation of discourse and the change that the respective illocutionary act implies), the

rule of sincerity ("which corrects what could be understood from the preliminary rule), the essential rule (which gives an account of what actually happens through the execution of the illocutionary act).

The processes of illocutionary force determine how the statement P is predicated about the referential term R. There is something that characterizes the relationship between the illocutionary force F and P and that does not exist in the relation between F and R. According to the theory of speech acts, it is important to remember the fact that in any discursive act there are three acts of language, which are performed simultaneously: a locutionary act (of uttering a linguistic sequence), a illocutionary act (of realizing an intention to communicate by even uttering that linguistic sequence) and a perlocutionary act (of provoking a reaction from the audience of the uttering of the respective linguistic sequence). The illocutionary acts – of the type F (R, P) – to which Searle refers are of all kinds: either something is simply asserted, or a request for taking action is formulated (F establishes that the object referred to as R must P), a question is asked (where the term F is interrogative[8]), or a suggestion of action (advice) etc. is given[9]. In the case of the act of thanking, it is found that the rule of sincerity and the essential rule overlap.

9. Summing up

Knowledge of the theory of speech acts is important in understanding communication as a social interaction, as the expression (ex-pression) itself is the intention to make known. Or, here is the pragmatic value of the act of any saying, of any speech. Austin reaches the idea that "what is expression in an isolated case depends on the circumstances," adding that we can perform a variety of actions with linguistic expressions (which are therefore called "speech acts"). It is understood that the meaning of the act of speaking is its very function, and this can be determined, as it is based on linguistic conventions, which become general rules, referring to modes of action and not to singular actions. Then, Searle shows that in any discursive act we find the functioning of language in communication, according to the "patterns" of the semiotic tripartite: the syntax will normalize the construction of the

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[8] It should be specified, for example, that there are two types of questions (and this, in an analysis only from a certain perspective): the questions *per se* (which seek to find information) and those which seek to determine whether the interlocutor knows him too the answer.

[9] Finally, "to warn" is similar to "to advise," but L's involvement in causing A to avoid event E is missing. Most warnings are hypothetical.

linguistic sequence, semantics will account for the adequacy of choosing that sequence to express communication intention, and pragmatics will anticipate the audience's reaction to the sequence.

And also Michel Foucault states:

We call hermeneutics the set of knowledge and techniques that allow us to make signs speak and discover their meaning.

We call semiology the set of knowledge and techniques that allow us to distinguish where the signs are, to define what establishes them as signs, to know their connections and the laws according to which they are chained. To seek meaning is to bring to light what is like. To look for the laws of signs means to discover things that are similar.

Everything would be immediate and obvious if the hermeneutics of resemblance and the semiology of signatures coincided perfectly.

The present study started as a manifestation of interest for the project developed by Martin Svantner (Svantner 2016), where the author undertook the study of "opposing forces in the frame of historical wars of arguments: […] consequences of our capacities to talk about "persuasive self" in often opposing terms of semiology/structuralism and semiotics.

The study of all the mentioned tendencies in explaining communication made it necessary to resort to the semiotic instrument, for a better understanding of things related to communication, as a shared use of symbolic systems. Looking at the above assertions, one could make the two views on communication be one: interpersonal/intersubjective interaction, on one hand, and semiotic interaction on the other hand, or intersubjective / semiotic interaction.

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