FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION: AN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CASE

Ștefan Vlăduțescu

Assoc. Prof., PhD, Hab. Dr. University of Craiova

Abstract: This study aims to clarify the core functions of human communication. The method used is complex and consists of critical analysis and synthesis of the views expressed by leading specialists in settling elements of convergence and divergence and configure a wide set of admissible functions and practices observed. On compatible functions and apply practices observed in the second stage, a set of procedures for corroboration, collation and confrontation with communication phenomenology. Finally, are retained as general functions of communication: relationship (networking) function, and "communization" (sharing) function. We check viability and generality of these functions on an example of organizational communication.

Keywords: communication, object of communication discipline, communication science, communication theory

1. Introduction

Functions are the activities for which an entity is destined or in which is used. Functions are entity responsibilities or missions. Communication functions are constituted by assumed missions by this to reach some goals. In fact, communication functions are communication system functions. A system has a set of fundamental functions and one or more complementary functions. By definition, a system is constituted by interrelation elements that roll on procedural, unitary and coherent, as entity less one function. Functions are not autotelic systemic elements. They are exerted by systemic entities. Functions are functions in the accomplishment by an entity of some goals. It is understood that functions are determined by goals that animates the system. But who does configure the goals? At their turn, are determined, are generated by needs. Ratiocination is the following: 1) a system has certain needs. 2) to satisfy them, decision instance of system assesses some goals, and 3) to

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

fulfill the goals are accessed or are created certain functions. The functions equation will be thus: needs generate goals, and goals generate functions. Needs can be necessities, obligations, imperatives, requirements etc. Goals can be: purpose, motive, targets, finality etc. Needs are existence requirements. Needs are transformed in goals. By reaching the goals, the needs are satisfied. Thus, they don't meet the stringency of needs and they don't demobilize goals. Not all needs are satisfied. Not all goals are reached. Concerning modalities of needs satisfaction, some of them are satisfied individual, others are satisfied by actions, interactions, transactions. Through communication are satisfied direct only a part of communication needs (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, social). Communication is however involved indirect in all needs satisfaction and in reaching of all goals.

For confirmation in communication domain of ratiocination and functions equation we mention the concordant assertions of some repute specialists who approach the issue incidental. F. E. X. Dance and C.E. Larson consider that „functions serve as the bases for purpose" and „purpose is built upon functional relationship" (Dance F. E. X., Larson C. E., 1976, p. 44). On the other hand, Sheila Steinberg defines function „as a way in which a phenomenon (such as communication) acts to fulfill its purpose" and defines that „the most important function of communication – or the purpose that communication serves – is to satisfy a need" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 25). M. E Roloff and C. N. Wright shows: „goals serve broader functions. (…) Interpersonal communication is motivated by a need" (Roloff & Wright, 2009, p. 102). In conditions in which motives constitute a class of goals results that needs are developed responsive and is solved by functions.

2. Towards a set of functions

Sustains concerning communication functions. In history of 70 years of paradigmatic communication, more specialists have pronounced related to communication functions.

A) *D. P. Cushman and G. C. Whiting find that communication has only one function "regulate consensus" (Cushman & Whiting, 1972, p. 219).*

B) F. E. X. Dance and C. E. Larson assert that communication have three basic functions: „the linking function" (linking function between human being and his environment), „the mental function" (a psychological function of developing of superior mental processes, in other terms, spirituality developing) and „the regulatory function" (a regulating function of human behavior) (Dance & Larson, 1976, p. 75, p. 91, p. 168).

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

C) At his turn, Denis McQuail registers 84 functions or appearances of communication. These one, he orders in 5 categorized groups: a) intrapersonal communication, b) interpersonal, c) in social groups, d) in formal organizations and social networks and e) in society. Among functions are registered: to express affection; to order; to determine symbolic borders; to reduce uncertainty; to conserve a coherent and positive image of self; to develop and to maintain a group conscious; to explain environment; to legitimize the power; to mobilize; to reproduce and to express national identity; to avoid, to solve and to reduce the conflicts etc. (McQuail, 1987, pp. 327-339). *D. McQuail get conclusion that four functions would be functions that defines essentially communication. The most important is being, the other three are adapting, controlling, affiliating (McQuail, 1987, p. 327 and p. 349).*

D) *S. Sanderson King asserts that communication has only one function: establish, monitoring, maintaining, and terminating relationship (King Sanderson, 1989, p. 2).*

E) Stefan Frydrychowicz considers 1) that „the term functions of communication indicate what can be accomplished by communicating", 2) that „the term dimensions of communications points to important planes that should be incorporated in communication so that it can be complete, and this effective" and 3) that, therefore, „dimensions of communication are primary and functions of communication are the spin-off" (Frydrychowicz, 2005, p. 78). Frydrychowicz emphasizes four dimensions of communication (information; emotion energy; joint activity, participation; establishing relation). He points out that to influence the human behavior that four dimensions have to fulfill two conditions 1) „all of them occur simultaneously" and 2) „they occur in specific *proportions* depending on situation" (Frydrychowicz, 2005, p. 80).

F) Sheila Steinberg believes that five functions „communication performs in our lives: physical and psychological need, establishing relationships providing information, assisting in decision-making, and persuading others" (Steinberg, 2006, p. 32).

G) R. B. Adler and G. Rodman speaks about "characteristics" şi "functions". They sustain that „communication (...) possesses three important characteristics: it occurs between humans, it is a process, it is symbolic" (Adler & Rodman, 2006, p.3). On the other hand, communication has four „functions", which are functions to satisfy needs: „psychical needs", „identity needs", „social needs" and „practical needs" (Alder & Rodman, 2006, pp. 9-11).

H) Jozien Bensing Hanneke de Haes shows that in medical communication we meet "six functions of communication: (1) fostering the relationship, (2) gathering information, (3)

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

providing information, (4) making decisions, (5) enabling disease- and treatment-related behavior, and (6) responding to emotions" (de Haes Hanneke, 2009).

Beyond these taxonomies, literature retains many applied or incidental attempts to systematize communication functions (Williams, 1957; Bochner, 1984; Tompkins, 1984; Dance & Larson, 1985; Gouran & Hirokawa, 1986; Goldkuhl, 2005a; Goldkuhl, 2005b; Vidales Gonzáles, 2011; Belichenko & Matvienko, 2012; Simonson, García-Jiménez, Siebers & Craig, 2012; Beytekin & Arslan, 2013; Frandsen, Johansen & Pang, 2013; Ledbetter, 2014; Engleberg & Wynn, 2014; Craig, 2015).

We consider that communication, communication system, has two general ontological functions: relation and communization. It has additionally, also many complementary functions to each type of communication. To answer needs and, accordant, private goals, communication develops, beyond of nuclear functions of relation and communization, complementary functions, specific functions to each of communication types: interpersonal communication, intergroup communication, social communication, politic communication, organizational communication, crisis communication, diplomatic negotiation communication, trading negotiation communication.

The two coordinates manifesting of relating and communization functions. The two functions can manifest on two coordinates: action coordinate and methodological -percentage coordinate.

a) Action coordinate retains modalities in which are conceived to roll on relating and communizing of message or messages meanings. Within Linear-Transmissive-Actional Paradigm, P1, the relating modality was unidirectional one, and communization modality was constituted by transmitting a message which communicator-target assimilated it totally. It was about an action sender towards receiver. In P1 fundamental function of communication was to action on receiver and to influence it: „we communicate to influence, to affect with intent", asserts D. K. Berlo (Berlo, 1960, p. 12). In Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2, relating was interactional type, and message communization took place through feedback: to a message was answered with another message. Between sender and receiver took place an intervention through messages. In P2, was central mutual influencing „ping-pong" type (Winkin, 1981, pp. 25-26). In Variable Geometry-Constitutive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, relating has variable geometry, a message meanings are co-created in communicational transaction. Meanings communization is produced in co-creative transaction. In P3, nuclear is communization

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

through transaction. Only in P3, communication gets to amplitude of its "etymological" function, of "common putting", of communization.

b) Methodological-percentage coordinate consist of applied methods for achieving relating function and communizing function. Relating is going directly from needs. According to A. Maslow's theory there is a set of five needs that naturally are satisfied in a strictly order. In "Maslow's pyramid" order it is possible to intervene, by satisfaction of some hidden needs. In terms of needs and goals, communization can be reached through two methods: convictive method and persuasive method. Convictive method is the way of rational arguments. For hidden needs satisfaction it is appealed to a method of concealment: persuasive method. Persuasive method subreptice way of persuasive arguments, predominant emotional.

Doxy communication, epistemic communication and mixed communication. Constructive function of communication is represented by communization. Communization object can be formed by: opinions, appreciations, beliefs or b) theoretical-scientist evaluations.

Opinions, appreciations, beliefs compose assessment category or doxy (opinions assembly). Doxy, means in Greek appreciations, opinions or beliefs. Doxy asserts G. Flostad, constitutes „mere opinion", and epistemic, „true knowledge" (Flostad , 2005, p. 10). Greeks didn't impose that doxy to be established or justified. For Opinions, appreciations, beliefs established scientist or justified cogitative, Greeks had lexical unit episteme. In human communication appears also doxy elements and epistemic elements. Such as, nuclear function of communication is specific exerted in epistemic areas. In other terms we can say that communication achieves communization either doxy, or epistemic, or mixed.

Communization function is performed in those three modalities. Accordingly, communication is three types: doxy communication, epistemic communication and mixed communication. Doxy communication has as practical forms: conversation, negotiation, sermon, discourse etc. Epistemic communication has as practical forms: scientist communication, prelections, lessons, scientist treaty etc. Mixed communication has as practical forms: advertising, propaganda, trading negotiation etc.

3. An example

Specific function organizational communication. As system, communication registers two media: an internal medium and an external medium (or context, situation, circumstance). Accordingly, to importance of media, beyond of definitive functions of communicative relating and doxy and epistemic communization, communication exerts also specific

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

functions. When internal systemic medium is an organization, we associate it with a specialized communication: organizational communication. This type of communication is characterized by adjusting to primary productive objectives of organization. Organizational communication is an objective-goal derivative of organization. Into an organization, production is a characteristic of efficiency. Organizational medium impregnated communication with process, with specific functions and features. General functions of relating and of communizing achieve characteristic functional derivatives. W. W. Neher asserts that organizational communication has five functions: 1) compliance-gaining, 2) leading, motivating, and influencing, 3) sense-making, 4) problem-solving and decision-making, 5) conflict management, negotiating, and *bargaining (Neher, 1997, pp. 18-26). In background of each of five functions is situated relating or communization.*

4. Conclusion

In other terms, the five ones are derivatives of these: a) relating as compliance, b) keeping of a communication relation and idea communization that employees must accept to be led, c) communization of an acceptance of organization, d) communization of idea that somebody solves issues, e) communization of idea that conflicts are solved through negotiation, being a transaction of a transaction.

REFERENCES:

Adler, R. B., & Rodman, G. R. (2006). Understanding human communication. New York NY: Oxford University Press.

Belichenko, M., & Matvienko, O. (2012). Models and functions of communication processes in personal interaction. *Studia linguistica*, (6 (2), 259-264.

Berlo, D. K. (1960). *The process of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Beytekin, O. F., & Arslan, H. (2013). The function of communication in faculty management. *Social Change Review*, 11(2), 137-152.

Bochner, A. P. (1984). The Functions of Communication in Interpersonal Bonding. *Communication Faculty Publications.* Paper 111.

Budică, I., & Dumitru-Traistaru, A. (2015). The Ascending Trend of Environmental Marketing in the Current Austerity/Crisis Period. *Polish Journal of Evironmental Studies*, 24(5), 2301- 2304. DOI: *10.15244/pjoes/42442*.

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

Călin, R. A. (2015). Self-Education through Web-Searching - An Exploratory Study. *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, 2(2), 47-58.

Craig, R. T. (2015). The Constitutive Metamodel: A 16-Year Review. *Communication Theory*, 25(4), 356-374.

Cushman, D. P., & Whiting, G. C. (1972). Approaches to Communication Theory: Toward Consensus on Rulle. *Journal of Communication*, 22, 217-229.

Dance, F. E. X., & Larson, C. E. (1976). *The Functions of Human Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Dance, F. E., & Larson, C. (1985). The functions of human communication. Information and behavior, 1, 62-75.

de Haes Hanneke, Bensing Jozien (2009). Endpoints in medical communication research, proposing a framework of functions and outcomes. *Patient education and counseling*, 74, 287–294.

Engleberg, I. N., & Wynn, D. R. (2014). *Think communication*. Pearson Higher Ed.

Ferencová, M., Jeleňová, I., & Kakalejčík, L. (2015, October). Social Media Usage in Product Information Searching. In *Applied Mechanics and Materials* (Vol. 795, pp. 69-76). Trans Tech Publications.

Flostad, G. (2005). *Introduction*. In G. Flostad (Ed.), *Language, meaning, interpretation*. Vol. 2. Heidelberg: Springer.

Frandsen, F., Johansen, W., & Pang, A. (2013). From management consulting to strategic communication: studying the roles and functions of communication consulting. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 7(2), 81-83.

Frydrychowicz, S. (2005). The influence of interpersonal communication our human development. *Psychology of Language and Communication*, 9(2), 69-82.

Goldkuhl, G. (2005). Developing internal crisis communication: New roles and practices of communication professionals. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 19(2).

Gouran, D. S., & Hirokawa, R. Y. (1986). Counteractive functions of communication in effective group decision-making. *Communication and group decision-making*, 81-90.

King Sanderson, S. (1989). *Communication. Roots, Visions, and Prospects*. In S. King Sanderson (Ed.), *Human Communication as a Field of Study*. State University of New York Press.

Ledbetter, A. M. (2014). The past and future of technology in interpersonal communication theory and research. *Communication Studies*, 65(4), 456-459.

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

McQuail, D. (1987a). *Functions of Communication: A nonfunctionalist Overview*. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Ed.), *Handbook of Communication Science*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

McQuail, D. (1987b). Functions of communication: A nonfunctionalist overview. Berger, Charles R. (Ed); Chaffee, Steven H. (Ed), (1987). Handbook of communication science (pp. 327-349). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications.

Negrea, Xenia (2013). Hard news, news value and fait divers in Romanian press. In I. Boldea (Ed.), Studies on Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue: Communication and Public Relations (pp. 153-160). Tirgu Mures: Arhipelag XXI.

Roloff, M. E., & Wright, C. N. (2009). *Message Construction and Editing*. In W. F. Eadie (Ed.), *21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*. Vol 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Simonson, P., García-Jiménez, L., Siebers, J., & Craig, R. T. (2012). Some foundational conceptions of communication: Revising and expanding the traditions of thought. *Empedocles: European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication*, 4(1), 73-92.

Smarandache, F., & Vlăduțescu, Ș. (2014). Towards a Practical Communication Intervention. *Revista de cercetare şi intervenţie socială*, (46), 243-254.

Smarandache, F., Vlăduțescu, Ș., Dima, I. C., & Voinea, D. V. (2015, October). An Operational View in Computational Construction of Information. In Applied Mechanics and Materials (Vol. 795, pp. 201-208). Trans Tech Publications.

Stănescu, G. C. (2015). Breaking News and News Alert, between Information and Spectacle for Rating. *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, 2(2), 81-91.

Steinberg, S. (2006). *Introduction to Communication Course Book 1: The Basics*, Capetown: Juta.

Tompkins, P. K. (1984). *The functions of communication in organizations. Handbook of rhetorical and communication theory*, New York, Allyn & Bacon, 659-719.

Vasile, E., & Grabara, I. (2014). Agricultural exploitation from the perspective of Romania's integration into the European Union. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, *10*(2).

Vidales Gonzáles, C. (2011). El relativismo teórico en comunicación. Entre la comunicación como principio explicativo y la comunicación como disciplina práctica. *Comunicación y sociedad*, (16), 11-45.

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)

Voinea, Dan-Valeriu (2013). Analysis of the socio-demographic, cultural and economic status of Romanian immigrants in Illinois. In Iulian Boldea (Ed.), Studies on Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue: History (pp. 121-130). Tirgu Mures: Arhipelag XXI.

Williams, H. (1957). IV: Some Functions of Communication in Crisis Behavior. *Human Organization*, 16(2), 15-19.

Winkin, Y. (1981). *La nouvelle comunication.* Paris: Seuil.

BDD-V2059 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.75 (2026-11-06 19:32:44 UTC)