



Communication Environment: Context/Situation/Framework

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Abstract. The study explores the relationship between the communication behavior and the environment in which it takes place. Meta-analytical approach shows that, in general, the environment has an impact on the communication behavior: any communication behavior is contextualized, is subject to the environment. In an operational taxonomy there are three different specific types of communication environment: the generic context, the specific situation and the special framework. It follows that in relation to communication behavior, the communication environment induces shared influences:

- a) the generic context defines a wide spectrum of optional communication behavior,
- b) the specific situation determines a set of communication behaviors, and
- c) the framework requires the choice of a behavior for a narrow set of communication behaviors relatively standardized.

Keywords: communication environment, communication context, communication situation, communication framework.

1. Communication environment and behavior

The role relationships defined as “sets, the implicitly identified and accepted, of reciprocal rights and obligations between the members of the same socio-cultural system” (Fishman, 1975, p. 157) manifest as behavior in the situation. The situation does not act automatically. It establishes and produces effects only through communicators and their interventions. Access to and participation in a communicative situation does not occur until after a decision process. We can talk about “communicative thinking” and “analysis of communication situations” (Miege, 1998, p. 109).

For each situation, the actors generate an action representation. Communicators act according to the representation that they give to the situation. R. K. Merton, starting from W. I. Thomas’s theorem (“If a person defines the situations as real, they are real in their consequences”), developed the corollary of the self-realized prophecy by which the current course “of the situation is a sample of the words initially said” (Chelcea, 1999, pp. 3-6). Defining the situation (prophecy, prediction) is part of the situation and thus it affects the subsequent consequences. Like any unwanted expectations, false expectations are realized. There is an alternative for prophecy: the Pygmalion effect, meaning to get from the others what we expect. Taking into account the cognitive schema that is triggered when a communicator decides to be in a situation of communication, it can be argued that individuals are inertial: a situation diagnosed as such produces inertial effects. Seen from the outside, this phenomenon of adaptive self-constraint appears as a situational constraint. The truth is that through the situational awareness, the obligations imposed by this, the individual poses a low resistance to adapt (to the situation) and obeys its precepts. “It has been demonstrated, J.-C. Abric shows, that the action of individuals or groups is directly determined by the four components of the representation given to the situation (the representation of the good, of the task, of the others and of the context). They are acting on and determine the significance of the situation, thereby inducing the behaviors, cognitive approaches and the type of inter-individual and intergroup relations” (Abric, 1997, p. 122). Another way in which situations affect people's behavior, besides

the expectant one, is represented by the accidental. Without being aware of it, individuals fall in different situations. On this idea, Eysenck claims that “the accident is a social situation” and that “people have an aggressive and disagreeable behavior largely because of the situation they are placed in” (Eysenck, p. 9 and p. 10). Human personality is related to social learning. Except for some extremes, character traits are likely to be modulations of personality, especially when the situation constraints are weak. But when they are strong, the determinants of the situation trigger emotions in people a little anxious or choleric. “The temperament and situation are in interaction to create different aspects of personality,” concludes A. Lieury (1990, p. 195) (also Georgescu, 2009; Georgescu, 2011).

Hartshorne, May and Shuttleworth (Apud. Kapferer, 1998, p. 252) examined the behavior of children in various situations in which they could lie, cheat, steal. These cases ranged from games to sports competitions, through exercises or school exams. The authors inferred that every child seemed to react not by moral predisposition, but according to each situation. Following very similar situations, a child would cheat, lie or steal variably. From experiments of the same kind, W. Michel came to the conclusion that if one accepts the dispositions and intellectual capacities, the influence of other so-called predispositions is minimal, i.e. to know one's position on a given feature allows predicting the behavior with a range of error so great that we can ask the utility to know this place. W. Michel observed: the behavior changes when the situation changes. Contrary to appearances, people's behavior is hardly under the control of general stable provisions. A person will be hostile here, but conciliatory there. The impression of coherence which evolves from observing others' behavior is mainly based on the fact that the observation takes place in the same environment, in a similar situation: at home, at work, etc. The stability of the intra-situational behavior is normal. It reflects the specific constraints of that situation (Cojocaru, Sandu & Ponea, 2010; Cojocaru, 2010; Cojocaru, 2013). Clearly, situations affect the behaviors and intentions more rather than general the predispositions. The decision to take action depends on the influence of the

factors specific to the situation (Sălcudean, 2009; Gorun et al, 2010; Gavrilovici & Oprea, 2013).

2. Classification of communication environments

Various social and heterogeneous communication environments express the diversity of human lifestyle. The individual states either as the subject involved in the tasks of working, playing, learning, or as a participant in a contest (Horga, 2007; Brie & Horga, 2010). He sometimes appears as an organizer and beneficiary of leisure functions, sometimes as a producer or consumer of material or spiritual goods. "In all these situations, P. Golu emphasizes, which means as many occupations - the very rest and relaxation as ways to occupy your time, man, whether analyzing a problem or making a decision, whether attending a show, or visiting an exhibition, whether heading to the stadium, or lost in the crowd of buyers in a store, meets others, comes into contact with them" (Golu, 1996, p. 39). The thinking of the communication environment concept in communicology can be achieved only at the intersection of social psychology, linguistics and psycholinguistics. The clarifying reflection is required to take into account the polysemy of terms and the ambiguity of notions in the proximity of the concept of communication environment (Balaban, 2005; Gavriluță, 2009; Vlad & Coldea, 2011; Sandu & Caras, 2013).

We can start in this endeavor from a statement of the psycholinguist F. Bresson: "Linguists understand the context as designated by the environment or situation, and psychologists understand the intra-linguistic relationships" (Bresson, 1963, p. 40). Here we find many concepts: context, environment, situation, intra-linguistic relationships. On the other hand, two famous psychologists such as J. G. Seamon and D. T. Kenrick use only the notion of context, stating: "The context helps us give sense" (1992, p. 135). In other thinking, the remarkable communicologist V. S. Dâncu uses, like many other professionals, mainly just the notion of context: "We cannot analyze and understand the meaning of communication without catching the relational context in which it is drawn: communication is a fragment of relationship" (Dâncu, 1999, p. 82), but he talks about "the overall context of a particular

situation” (Dâncu, 1999, p. 89). There are other psycho-linguistic specialists and communicologists who use the context and situation. Tatiana Slama-Cazacu, author of a book translated into several languages (called “Context”) shows: a) “the context should not be fetishised, it must be considered as the only coercive force” (Slama-Cazacu, 1968, p. 429) and b) “the situation is part of a broader context” (Slama-Cazacu, 1980, p. 174). Along the same direction, Professor Mihai Dinu first delimits the context [“any interpersonal communication takes place in a context that has an impact on the conduct of interaction. The main dimensions of the context are the *spatial, temporal, psychological and social* ones” (Dinu, 2004, p. 42)], then the situation [“The place and time of the interaction as well as the role relationship between the interlocutors will be part of the communication situation” (Dinu, 2004, p. 89)].

Thus we can think about a broad global context and an average comprehension situation. We can, moreover, think about a “limited context”, the framework: “The framework, S. Moscovici shows, is an authority, it puts some pressure on the individual, forcing him to have a certain verbal behavior and a certain conduct” (Moscovici, 1994, p. 14). It is known the demonstration made by the members of the School of Palo Alto so as a phenomenon would remain incomprehensible when the “field observation” were not “broad enough to include the context in which it occurred”; “we cannot understand the complexity of the relationship between a fact and the framework in which it is inserted, between an organism and its environment without any analysis into the “context”, for nothing is isolated, everything is in interaction” (Watzlawick, Hamlick-Beavin & Jackson, 1972, p. 15).

Our thesis is that there are three model-types of communication environment: the framework, the situation (named or unnamed) and the context. Note that the degree of control of the communication environment is a dimension that enables the ordering of situations in a continuum (Derrida, 1977; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Abowd, Dey, Brown, Davies, Smith & Steggles, 1999; Dey, 2001; Birdwhistell, 2011; Givón, 2014). The work or situations oriented towards status provide another contrast unlike the situations oriented towards a person. In the first case, there may be a criterion of achievement in an activity, in the second

case, the focus can turn to itself and to the expression of personal emotions. Distinction was made between the interaction of work, family and friendship (Gavriluță, 2003). As it is known, the classifications of communication situations differ depending on the geographical location, the time, presence or absence of a group. Every communication situation can be approached in terms of the requirements imposed on them by the reception and acceptance (Otovescu, 1997; Otovescu, 2006; Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2011; Frunză, 2014). Communication situations, constraints and their liberties exist only in so far as communication actors acknowledge them and apply them (Bettinghaus, 1961; Hymes, 1972; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Mehrabian, 1977; Borm, Owen & Tijs, 1992; Barkhuus, 2003; McCroskey, 2010; Gavriluță, 2012). Communicators are those who make social relations functional to trigger the situations. In this regard, each of the participants must interpret the social- transactional communicative and personal behaviors and act (to take communicative action) relying on the interpretation of the situation, at least to the same extent in interpreting their intentions and themselves as individuals (characteristics, opinions, attitudes, gestures). It is generally accepted that there are “standard social situations” such as “complaining of the noise you hear coming from the neighbors, leading a party, introducing yourself at a professional meeting, taking part in a funeral, making a speech, having a party, apologizing someone” (Argyle, 1998, p. 75 and p. 76). A strategy for the identification of situations is the examination of the terminology used to describe them: religious ceremony, dinner, interview, picnic, break for lunch, conversation, friendly discussion, class etc. (Goffman, 1963, pp. 24-26). There is no term for the status of participants (interventions), as we have, for example, in a commercial situation between “clients” and “sellers” (Cace, Arpinte, Cace & Cojocaru, 2011; Bărgaru & Cojocaru, 2012). A criterion for the classification of situations can be found in naming or un-naming them: those named are those mentioned above, and the un-named, although not “labelled”, distinguish and the participants are aware that “the unnamed situation” implies certain rights and obligations. The interaction generated by existing statutes in the professional organization has no name: this social situation is an unnamed one. The named and unnamed situations impose certain constraints on all

elements that support their individuality: the time and place are strict. It cannot be admitted, for example, that the time like midnight interfere during the preaching situation, except holidays. At that time the communicators are certainly not in the sermon situation (Dobrescu & Bârgăoanu, 2003; Stoica, 2004; Stoica, 2007; Tabără, 2012; Sandu, 2013). The fact is also that people in a restaurant or at the pool cannot be in a sermon situation. The “called” situation (sermon, greeting, greetings, etc.) are not what they seem to be at first sight, isolated communication activities which are assigned to an unsociable and distinct communicative motivation. They are not an exception. Such models could not operate without regard to society, because they would not have substance. “Called” communication situations can exist only in a space of communication where the production and consumption of meanings, symbols and information exist. To this conclusion leads any objective analysis of communication system. Unlike other “life situations” such as the standard communication situation of school class, also called pedagogical situation, the dialogue is asymmetric in terms of word power (the teacher has an upward force) and it is not carried out iteratio question - response, but more broadly: question-answer - evaluation, etc. (Iluț, 1997, p. 139) (also, Olimid, 2009). A type of communicative situation is the “suggestion situation”. This is defined as the set of elements with converging and challenging action of a suggestive behavior, requiring the person to comply without calling the critical powers of reason (Holdevici & Ciofu, 1982). Such a situation is the proper framework and successful condition for suggestive communication that leads to hypnosis by suggestion (Cojocaru, Purcaru, Bragaru & Cojocaru, 2011). Beyond the standard social situation sets, in every culture there is a number of “typical situations” that are privilegedly perceived by individuals trained within it. They have prescribed roles and therefore plans, modes to conduct an action. “Everywhere in the world there are expressions which we call standard idioms and are used in specific situations” (Hall, 1976, p. 128-146). Similarly, there are idiomatic standard situations consisting of configurations of human and material elements recognized as typical forms of its environment by a cultural group. These “forms”

are schemes providing a certain meaning to elements: there are “familiar” situations when individuals feel well, which facilitates communication.

A communication framework strictly imposes a behavior (Kim, 1980; Daft & Huber, 1986; Kraidy, 2003; Arundale, 2006; Frunză, 2011; Frunză, 2013).

3. Conclusion

Communication is influenced by the environment it takes place in. The communication environment induces constraints. The communicational contextualizing means adapting the communicational behavior to the developing context. The specific environment constraints are reflected in communication. Communication decisions are under the influence of communication environment, be it the general context, the specific situation or the special framework.

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