

## A BATTLE WITH UNCERTAINTY 1 OF COMMUNICATION AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE: TITLE UNCERTAINTY

**Ștefan VLĂDUȚESCU, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Craiova**

*Abstract: The study falls within the basic research component of General Communication Science and deals with one of the major ontological uncertainty of communication as an academic discipline: uncertainty about the title. It is considered a meta-analysis of denominative options.*

*First, it appears that, in fact, there are four communication uncertainties: uncertainty regarding title, uncertainty about status, uncertainty of place and uncertainty of unification-fragmentation. Then in a constructive-cognitive-cogitative approach of titles under which communication is studied ("Communication", "Communication theory", "Communicology", "Communication study", "Communication studies", "Communication science", "Sciences de l' information et de la communication"); it highlights the uncertainty on the title.*

*Our meta-analytic approach is to remove a few nuclei of certainty from the mass of uncertainty. From these ideational formations of certainty crystallized by meta-analysis General Communication Science results a possible, rigorous, robust, flexible and convergent title, consisting of Fundamental Communication Science, Applied Communication Research and "Grounded Practical" Communication Application.*

*The war with the uncertainties must continue: the other three are to be studied.*

*Keywords: communication, uncertainty, meta-analysis, denominative options, Communication theory*

### **1. An undisciplined discipline**

The fact that the discipline that studies the phenomena of communication does not have a fully accepted title indicates that communication is an "undisciplined" discipline. Strangely, communication is growing fast through theoretical contributions and practical effective inductions, insertions, interventions without having been formed as a solid corpus of knowledge. Equally curious is that, although having radically different perspectives, the specialists concerned with communication have a common communicative consciousness. This leads to the fact that the storehouse of communicational knowledge and the communicational consciousness common to the community of experts form a strange paradigm in turn. We find that the two primary conditions of the paradigm (delineated by T. Kuhn - 1998), the common knowledge luggage and the cohesive community of specialists are met. However, it does not seem that communication is a "disciplined discipline".

Michel Foucault (1980) and Gary Genosko (1998, 2012) admit the existence of some "undisciplined theories": those theories coming out of the epistemological canonical framework of the accredited discipline. We believe that, ontologically, communication is undisciplined because it has not succeeded to solve the first imperative of any academic discipline: the title.

As an undisciplined discipline, communication generates disorder in the "disciplinary system" and contributes to the phenomenon of "chaos of disciplines" (Abbott, 2001). That, however, it was preoccupied and still concerned with its own title, means that disorder is

under control and that chaos is tempered. Indiscipline of communication is also a supervised disorder and a controlled chaos. Undoubtedly, thus communication can survive. Indeed, as shown, it is doing very well, it improves and expands. But its situation remains fragile. Communication is strained by a bearable, but painful uncertainty: uncertainty about the title. (This is not an internal uncertainty, one inside the communication process, a theme analyzed competently and thoroughly by C. R. Berger & R. Calabrese - 1975 - and C. R. Berger & Gudykunst G. - 1995. What we are treating is an external uncertainty, an imprecision in the title.)

Indiscipline of communication consists of four localized and controllable uncertainties: uncertainty regarding title, uncertainty about status, uncertainty of place and uncertainty of unification-fragmentation. Communication discipline lacks an accredited (musical) "la" in order to be provided sustainable and onto-epistemological profile permanently. For now, communication is mined by instability.

## 2. Register of title instability

For the body of knowledge about communication there is a group of denominations. The discipline whose onto-epistemic object is communication has many titles. Communication seems to have more kingdoms ordered by specific standards. The denominations systematization of communication discipline can be made according to a chronological and logical criterion.

We have the denomination "communication theory". It benefits of chronological priority. The founding studies published in 1948 by Claude E. Shannon in "The Bell System Technical Journal", 27 (3) and 27 (4), are called "A Mathematical Theory of Communication". They were integrated a year later in "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" (1949), a volume published along with Warren Weaver. (with either the indefinite article "A" or the definite article, "The", "communication theory" remains the same). G. Gerbner (1967), K.K. Sereno and C. D. Mortensen (1970) will keep the founding denomination. The "communication theory" line will be continued by N. L. Harper (1980), F. E. X. Dance (1982), L. Grossberg (1982), D. O'Hair & G. L. Kreps (1990), D. L. Kincaid (1987), K. Krippendorf (1994), D. P. Cushman & B. Kovacic (1995), J. R. Liska & G. Cronkhite (1995), J. A. Anderson (1996), P. Colly (1996), S. W. Littlejohn (1996), R. T. Craig (1996), J. O. Greene (1997), E. A. Griffin (1997), R. Langer (1998), R. T. Craig (1999), R. L. Heath & J. Bryant (2000), D. McQuail (2002), S. D. Perry & M. A. Moffitt (2004), D. McQuail, P. Golding & E. De Bens (2006), J. Bryant & D. Miron (2007), S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss (2008), R. T. Craig (2009), S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss (2009), M. B. Slawen & D. W. Stacks (2009). That denomination line is supporting, firstly, by the fundamental journal "Communication Theory".

For a clear and reductive denomination as "Communication", many others are mentioned: L. Thayer (1968), D. Mc Quail (1975), T. O'Sullivan et al. (1983), G. M. du Plooy (1995), M. Dinu (1999), D. McQuail (1999), K. E. Rosengren (2000), G. I. Fâtre (2004), K. Beck (Apud. Averbek - 2008), P. Cabin and J. F. Dortier (2008). Also, in a way, vectors of that denomination are defined some very important and old journals as "Journal of Communication", "Communication Monographs", "Review of Communication", "Communication Review", "European Journal of Communication", "Nordicom".

In a logic order, we retain even purely tautological-neutral and not incorrect name of "discipline of communication" for communication discipline (Shepherd, 1993). Then, a discipline that deals with communication is a "communication study": Everett M. Rogers pronounces even for other analytical tautological name "communication study" (1994). A modular version of "communication study" would be, in a computational order, "communication studies": John Fiske (1981), H. Hardt (1992), F. L. Casmir (1994), D. K. Mumby, C. Stohl (1996), R. T. Craig and D. A. Carbone (1998), M. S. Waltman (2002), W. Barton, A. Beck (2005), D. M. Bollinger (2005), S. Steinberg (2007). The most influent vector of that position is the journal "Communication studies".

An optional branch as strong as "communication theory" is "communication science". This onto-epistemological line was accredited by Wilbur L. Schramm with "science of human communication" (Schramm, 1963). Experts such as C. R. Berger, S. H. Chafee (1987), J. M. McLeod & J. G. Blumer (1987), J. J. Bradac (1988), J. M. Wieman, R. P. Hawkins & S. Pingree (1988), J. Lazar (1992), S. R. Olson (1994), J. J. Van Cuilenburg, O. Scholten & G. W. Noomen (1998), M. T. Palmer & G. A. Barnett (1998), F. J. Boster (2002), J. Bryant & E. J. Pribanic-Smith (2009), C. R. Berger, M. E. Roloff & D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (2010), F. J. Boster & J. L. Sherry (2010), D. K. Burnham, R. Dale, C. J. Stevens (2011) will sign on this line. Similarly, the "communication sciences" variant, B. Dervin, M. Voight (1991), and the "science of communication" variant, J. J. Pilotta, A. Mickunas (1990), are mentioned. We observe that for "communication science" there is no significant journal.

C. Pavit (2001) acknowledges both "communication science" and "communication theory," then will choose somewhat communication science (Pavit, 2010).

There is a "communicology" denominative line as well. In the 1950s, this designation is supported by F. K. Knower, E. Murray and W. Johnson. Subsequently, it is resurrected in the 1970s by Vilem Flusser (see Catt & Eicher-Catt, 2010). Since the 1980s and today, it has been promoted by J. A. DeVito (1976, 1982), Richard L. Lanigan (1992, 1994), I. E. Catt and D. Eicher-Catt, 2010). Communicology direction does not benefit of an important journal.

In France and in the European zone of French influence the title "sciences de l'information et de la communication" (SIC) is mainly used: Daniel Bougnoux (1993), Alex Mucchielli (2001), Y. Jeanneret and B. Olivier (2004), Ștefan Bratosin (2007), M. A. Tudor (2013). The father of that direction, as show R. Boure (2002) and Stephanie Averbeck (2008), is Robert Escarpit in 1970s.

In Germany the propensity to "communication science" (Kommunikationswissenschaft) is prevailing: S. J. Schmidt (2003), M. Meyen (Apud. Averbeck, 2008), A. Scholl (2010), indirectly W. Donsbach (2006).

In Switzerland, B. Miege (1995) and S. Olivesi (2006) are for "sciences de l'information et de la communication" (SIC), but P. Copley and P. J. Schulz (2013) are for "communication science".

Several major Polish specialists prefer communicology („komunikologia”): A. Ogonowska (2005), E. Kulczycki (2012).

In Romania, even at the formal and institutional level, the French orientation mentioned is preferred ("sciences de l'information et de la communication"): N. G. Drăgulănescu (1999), I. M. Borchin (2001), E. Târșiman (2013), D. Cotoară (2003), C. Beciu (2009). We also record the option for "communication theory": M. Dinu (1999), S. Craia

(2000), V. Marinescu (2003), V. Tran and I. Stănciugelu (2003), G. I. Fârte (2004), A. Ritt (2004), I. O. Pânișoară (2004), L. Iacob (2006), P. Dobrescu, A. Bârgăoanu, N. Corbu (2007). Flaviu C. Rus resorts to "communication sciences" (2005). Also, Ș. Vlăduțescu (2004; 2009) used "communicology" and "communication science".

In the Spanish area are in power "teoria de la communication" (M. Martin-Algarra, 2003; M. Martin-Serrano, 2007) and "comunicologia" (Caceres, 2009) are in power.

Chronologically, in its canonical evolution, the name changes from "communication theory" (Shannon, 1948) through "Communicology" (1958), "Science of human communication" (Schramm, 1963), "Communication" (Thayer, 1968), "Communication Science" (Berger & Chafee, 1987), "Science of Communication" (Pilotta & Mickunas, 1990), "Communication Sciences" (Dervin & Voight, 1991), "Sciences de l' information et de la communication" (Bougnoux, 1993).

### 3. Toward a thinking solution

Speaking different "languages" and "registers" of communication, specialists in communication discipline are getting on very well. In other words, within the academic discipline of communication, the specialists share the same "idea of communication" but sing in different voices when it comes to the word or expression to formulate the title.

Communication as a discipline has a few certain sources: Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Rhetoric (Robert T. Craig - 1999 - considers these the four traditions of communication. We consider them sources of communication and also axes of communication. In another study, we perform a comparison between what we call The Traditions Standard-Matrix - R. T. Craig and the Communication Axes Standard-Matrix which we propose). Communication has developed and separated, but left the territory of Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology and Rhetoric with true towns, cities under the sovereignty of communication.

These sciences from "communication spring" can be a model for an integrative denomination of the discipline dealing with the study of communication.

One relevant suggestion can be provided by Sociology and Psychology. The current name of sociology was given by Auguste Comte. He recommended in "Course de la philosophie positive" in 1830 (see Comte, 2010) that the discipline and the special method of studying the society be called "sociology" from Lat. "socius" (associate, companion) + Gr. "logos" (speech, study of).

On the other hand, it is known that Psychology comes from Gr. "psyche" (soul, mind, spirit, breath) and Gr. "logos" (speech, study of). Psychology first appears as a title of science in Christian Wolff in "Psychologia empirica" (1732). An opinion that I could build on an analogy to build on a relevant title for communication discipline is identified at the psychologist K. J. Gergen. The famous specialist uses three concepts: psychology, psychological science and scientific psychology: "In recent decades, psychology has undergone a major revolution in its view of individual knowledge. As this account will reveal, psychological science now confronts an impasse, a point at which both the knowledge claims of the profession and the individualist view of knowledge sustained by these claims cease to be compelling" (Gergen K. J., 1994, p. 3). By analogy, by studying communication we move towards "communicology": Lat. "communico, communicare" + Gr "logos" will

result into "communicology". In Latin we have the verb "communico, communicare" and the noun (the Nominative) "communicatio" from the past participle of the verb. In the Accusative, the past participle was "communicationem", it gave the French "communication", a word taken over later in all Indo-European languages. Going into details, Lat. "communico, communicare" comes from Lat. "communis" ("which shares duties with another"); in turn, Lat. "communis" comes from Lat. "cum" ("with", "together") and Lat. "munis" ("helpful", "gracious", "owing"). We have to mention Lat. "immunis" which means "exempted from duties, exempted from performing duties" that gave the current "immune" (with derivative "immunity"). Complementarily, P. Copley and P. J. Schulz (2013) recorded for the Lat. adjective "munis" the generic adjectival meaning of "duty, gift". So in Latin, "communicare" had the generic meaning of "something to put together", "to make common" and the concrete meanings: "participate, join, share, inform, to share, to divide, to unify". In general, "to communicate" must be understood, etymologically speaking, as "something to put together", "something to make common". "To communicate" is "to make something common" (Bohm, 2013), see also J. W. Bowers and J. J. Bradac (1981). Briefly, K. E. Rosengren states: "When we communicate, we make things common" (Rosengren, 2000, p.1).

The contemporary word "communication" should be understood as "making something common" and "putting something together" with someone.

It is known that in the 1950s the founders of the International Communication Association, Franklin H. Knower and Elwood Murray, along with Wendel Johnson campaigned for "communicology". In 1958-1959, according to what D. W. Moeller retained from Wendel Johnson, they tried to find a concept to designate "the emerging large field" of communication. W. Johnson says that then "Communicology appears to be a possible name for this field" (Moeller, 1968, p. 45). Later, Franklin H. Knower will speak about "communicology" and "communicologist", about the fact that "realistic communicology in today's world must be multi-disciplinary. There are few disciplines in the modern college curriculum which do not have some interest in communication" (Knower, 1962, p. 182). Then there was the episode of "communicology" represented by Vilem Flusser, in the 1970s, which was a lower directive guiding resonance. J. A. DeVito had a notable influence with his approach in 1970-1980. First, Joseph A. DeVito promotes "communicology" as "the study of the science of communication" (DeVito, 1976, p. V). Then, he talks about the fact that "communicology is the study of the art and the science of communication" (DeVito, 1982, p. V). Note that in 1979, Robert T. Craig, among others, adopted in part the concepts of "communicology", "discipline of communicology" and "communicologist" (Craig, 1979, pp. 99-121). Since the 1980s, R. L. Lanigan has used "Communicology" from a philosophical direction, from phenomenology, he believes that "Communicology is the science of human communication" (Lanigan, 2013, p. 75). I. E. Catt and D. Eicher-Catt (2010) are the continuers of R. L. Lanigan's communicological orientation. They move the center of gravity of communicology within information and semiotics territory, they keep the phenomenological impregnation performed by Lanigan: "Communicology designates a holistic approach of communication, encompassing information theory and diverse fragments of the field" (Catt J. E., Eicher-Catt D., 2010, p. 17).

In other words, the founders and leaders of the International Communication Association in the 1950s experienced the uncertainty of a covering title. "Communicology"

was supported as a denomination. After about 63 years we find that the natural name, epistemologically speaking (communicology), won only some lateral fields with a rarefied structure and not strong areas of impact and influence (communication theory and communication science).

#### **4. Conclusion: momentary proposal to resolve uncertainty**

Without being compromised, the natural onto-epistemological title, "communicology", appears as devoid of the force to reoccupy, from the second line, the area of current membrane of communication, Communication-as-a-Multi-field (Multi-space) and Multi-structure-Universe Membrane. Unable to impose itself over an ideational configuration restricted to a field, over Communication-as-a-Field Membrane (R. T. Craig), "Communicology" is unlikely to set itself up in a polar star over a universe.

We find that the natural title has eroded and is disregarded for now. However, the study of communication as an academic discipline must come out from uncertainty. We need a disciplined communication discipline. We need an organizing denomination to provide rigor, flexibility and robustness. We believe that we can establish a comprehensive, robust, rigorous and flexible convergent General Communication Science. This will have three branches. The first part will be purely conceptual, Fundamental Communication Science, it will handle the basic conceptual entities. It will cover what is now subsumed to some specialties of the discipline, such as Communication Fundamentals, Communication Principles and Communication Bases.

General Communication Science will then control actual Applied Communication Research. This will be the research component of communication phenomena and will deal with the release of theories, notions and concepts which, on the one hand, accede to the conceptual and mega-conceptual pantheon of Fundamental Communication Science, and, on the other hand, descend through "Grounded Practical" Communication Application to the daily practice of communication.

This third component ("Grounded Practical" Communication Application), initiated by Robert T. Craig and Karen Tracy (1995) as "Grounded Practical Theory", will focus on the implementation of theory in everyday communication practice. In Applied Communication Research, the phenomenon becomes the concept: patterns are detached from natural communication. In "Grounded Practical" Communication Application, the concept is down at the level of the current communicative practice: for efficiency, current communicative practices are conceptually impregnated. Here the conceptual injects and improves the phenomenal.

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