

COMMUNICOLOGY: APPROACHING THE DISCIPLINE'S CENTENNIAL

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Abstract

Communicology is the science of human communication. The essay tracks the nearly one hundred year development of the concept of communicology into a formal discipline in the human sciences. The chronology of publications begins in the 1920s with the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and develops up through 2010 with current publications specifying the application of theory and practice in such area as intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and cultural communicology throughout the world. A focus of this disciplinary development is the foundation in 2000 of the International Communicology Institute.

Keywords

Communicology, discourse, human science, human communication, semiotics, phenomenology

Presentation

The human essence of consciousness, and awareness of that consciousness in discourse, is communication in its full semiotic display of verbal and nonverbal codes as the phenomenology of experience. The accumulation of this lived experience constitutes a memory of practice that each of us lives out in the comportment of our embodiment. In this sense, Culture is born as the social world of the other in the harmony of symbolic practice borne by the Person as transactions with Others. There is a discipline in the human sciences which is devoted to the theoretical (eidetic) and applied (empirical) research on such discourses and practices: Communicology is the science of human communication.

In the analysis of the Discipline of Communicology that follows, I want to highlight various thinkers and their research contribution over the nine decades of scholarship that led up to the founding of the International Communicology Institute in 2000 and its first decade (2010) of research activity marked by the present special issue of Razon y Palabra. All this by way foreshadowing the coming centennial of the discipline of Communicology that will occur in the year 2022.

1. Communicology in the 1920s

The historical origin of Communicology as a disciplinary subject matter occurs in 1922 when the Father of Phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, gives a series of lectures in German at the University College in London, United Kingdom. On this occasion, Husserl explains the main philosophical thesis of his method as a “transcendental sociological phenomenology having reference to a manifest multiplicity of conscious subjects communicating with one another”². The importance of this lecture was noted in a last minute appendix addition to the now famous Charles K. Ogden and I. A. Richards book, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and the Science of Symbolism* (1923).

Husserl's research project focuses on the fact that human beings, unlike animals and machines, communicate on three simultaneous semiotic levels of consciousness that integrate the expression and perception of (1) Affect or emotion, (2) Cognition or thought, and (3) Conation or purposeful action. The scholastic philosophers in the middle ages used the respective Latin terms: (1) *Capta*, (2) *Data*, and (3) *Acta*, which today are still in use to varying extents. Human consciousness thus functions as a simultaneous integration of (1) Awareness, or Preconsciousness, (2) Awareness of Awareness, or Consciousness, and (3) Representation of Awareness of Awareness, or variously, the symbolic process mediated as Nonconsciousness, Subconsciousness, and Unconsciousness. Jacques Lacan gives us a shorthand version of the three respective functions which he names (1) the Real, (2) the Imaginary, and (3) the Symbolic. In a more methodological context, Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to the embodied integration, respectively, of (1) Reflectivity of Description, (2) Reversibility of Reduction, and (3) Reflexivity of Interpretation. Likewise, Charles S. Peirce describes the semiotic nature of consciousness as a triadic identity among (1) an Object, the thing expressed or perceived (an Icon), (2) the Representamen, the expressed or perceived sign of the Object (an Index), and (3) the Interpretant, the learned experience of combining the Object and its Representamen (the Symbol).

The historical analysis that laid the groundwork for the contemporary models just mentioned was the monumental construction of the Human Sciences on the model of Culture by Ernst Cassirer. His major work entitled *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* in four volumes: *Language*, *Mythical Thought*, *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, and *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*. Cassirer provides the intellectual basis for what has become known as Qualitative Research Methodology inasmuch as he demonstrates the use of logic for validity (necessary condition) and reliability (sufficient condition) on the basis of normative logic systems (confirmed in the work of Charles S. Peirce). In a parallel, but independent fashion, Alfred Korzybski at the University of Chicago also contributed to the construction of the human science of culture with his first book, *Time-Binding: The General Theory* (1926). Korzybski distinguishes between in situ experience common in animals, and to a lesser degree in plants, called space-binding because that experiences is not transferable in space or time. When such in situ experiences can be accumulated and

transferred (symbols, language, speech) beyond the local embodiment, then time-binding occurs at a very rapid rate of transaction at various logical levels. Margaret Mead captures this cultural (time) transmission process in which adults learn from children wherein “the future is now”.

2. Communicology in the 1930s

The discipline of Communicology as a conceptual category emerged in 1931 when the American anthropologist and linguist, Edward Sapir, wrote the first ever entry “Communication” for The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Here, Sapir was building on the monumental work of Ernst Cassirer who also wrote on the logic of the human sciences. Cassirer’s semiotic phenomenology and Edmund Husserl’s existential phenomenology were elaborated (1) in Germany by Karl Bühler (Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language) who analyzed and critiqued Husserl’s phenomenological methodology in the science of linguistics and (2) in the USA by Wilbur Marshall Urban (Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism) who introduces Husserl’s phenomenology to English speaking readers in the context of human communication as interaction in the constitution of values, i.e., symbolic behaviors that display a decision. In this same period, Alfred Korzybski’s 1933 Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics and his General Semantics Seminar 1937: Olivet College Lectures provide the analytic ground for what will later become known as the postmodern turn in philosophy, i.e., the critique of Aristotelian logic by the reversal of the “laws of thought” on the basis of the theory of symbology. Unfortunately, Korzybski’s logic proposals were marginalized by mainstream philosophy because he insisted on the Human Science condition of real world applications for social utility, i.e., the communicative constitution of social norms as sanity. These insights would have to wait until they were re-introduced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault.

3. Communicology in the 1940s

Because of the Second World War, little academic work emerged in Communicology with the notable exception of Wendell Johnson's *People in Quandaries: The Semantics of Personal Adjustment* (1946). An intellectual follower of Korzybski, his book covers a synthesis of the non-Aristotelian symbology and the emerging human science of Communicology. Johnson attempts a presentation of the entire communication process, its stages and function, and the disorders that may occur. As a professional speech pathologist and audiologist, he was necessarily interested in the diagnosis of disorders. However, he and his colleagues were acutely aware of the theory construction requirement that normal communication be understood as a priority for analyzing its dysfunction. Incidentally, this same developmental sequence informs the only complete theory of human verbal communication later articulated by Roman Jakobson.

4. Communicology in the 1950s

Ever since the 1950s, the foundational work of Jürgen Ruesch, *Semiotic Approaches to Human Relations* (1953) and then Jürgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson in *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (1951) the commonly accepted networks of human discourse are: (1) the Intrapersonal Level (or psychiatric/aesthetic domain), (2) the Interpersonal Level (or social domain), (3) the Group Level (or cultural domain), and (4) the Intergroup Level (or transcultural domain). These interconnected network levels contain the process outlined by Roman Jakobson's theory of human communication. The Ruesch and Bateson *Communication* marks the emergence of the human science discipline of Communicology in the United States as an academic discipline. Their four level classification system has been foundational to the understanding of communication as process model researched professionally by members of the U.S. National Communication Association and the International Communication Association.

Thus in 1958 some twelve years after his first book, Wendell Johnson takes center stage with his suggestion that the human science of communication be designated as

“Communicology”. This leadership in naming a discipline came as a result of Johnson’s extension of General Semantics into the larger disciplinary issue of human communication in general. It was a natural extension of his professional service as President of both the International Society for General Semantics (1945) and the American Speech and Hearing Association (1950). Johnson’s defining 1958 comment was later published in the journal ASHA (1968, vol. 10, page 45): “. . . There is a need for a blanket term to serve as a name for the emerging large field represented by the rapidly increasing number of scientists, engineers, scholars, teachers, and clinicians who are distinctively concern with communication. “Communicology” appears to be a possible name for this field. By means of suitable adjectives the various areas of specialization within the general field could then be indicated. We might speak, for example, of oral communicology, literary communicology, telephonic communicology, mass media communicology—and, if preferred, speech communicology and hearing communicology.”

5. Communicology in the 1960s

A defining moment for Communicology occurs in 1962 when Franklin H. Knower published his historic article “A Model for Communicology” (The Ohio Speech Journal [annual publication], vol. 1, pp. 181-187; diagram, p. 183). As he comments on page 182: “The model we present is called a model of communicology. We believe there is a need for some such label. The scholar who strives to become an expert in this area can become a communicologist. He may also be a psychologist, an audio-visual specialist, a student of speech, a director of a theatre, a political scientist, television talent, a journalist, etc.” “Any 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.”

We should note the intellectual heritage at work here. Franklin H. Knower and Elwood Murray were the founders of the International Communication Association in 1950, which evolved in the USA from The National Society for the Study of Communication (of which Murray was President). Elwood Murray also founded the

General Semantics Institute in 1967 at the University of Denver and was its first Director. Murray's doctoral student, Thomas J. Pace was the dissertation director of Richard L. Lanigan, who in turn, was the founding Chairperson of the Philosophy of Communication Division (no. 9) in the International Communication Association meeting 29 May to 4 June 1977 at the first International Congress on Communication Science in Berlin, Germany. An intersecting connection in this context is the fact that Lanigan's B.A. and M.A. mentor in Philosophy was Hubert Alexander at the University of New Mexico (USA).

Historically, Wilbur Marshal Urban's doctoral student, Hubert Griggs Alexander, was a graduate student in philosophy at Yale University studying under Ernst Cassirer, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf. In 1967, Alexander wrote the first textbook, *The Language and Logic of Philosophy* (1967; reprint ed. 1988), devoted to explicating the connection among communication, linguistics, and logic. The now famous "Chapter One: Communication" presents a process model of human communication in which Symbology (Symbol, Referent, Experience, Concept) are incorporated into the semiotic phenomenology of the "communicator concept" in opposition to the "communicate concept" as a function of verbal and nonverbal transaction. Also of note, Alexander contributed an important essay to a special volume (1968, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1-40) of the journal *The Philosophy Forum* devoted to "Communication" which is entitled: "Communication, Technology, and Culture".

Alexander's model grounds the theory later developed by Roman Jakobson as the critique of the much misunderstood Shannon and Weaver model of Information Theory and machine informatics ("misunderstood" because Shannon and Weaver explicitly caution their readers that they are theorizing about machine function, not human behavior!). Thus, the shift in labels to Communicology and Communicologist is due largely to a systematic effort to avoid misunderstanding. The confusion was encouraged by the historical ambiguity of the "communication theory of information" proposed in 1949 by Shannon and Weaver as compared to Jakobson's proposal in 1960 to distinguish Communication Theory from "information theory" on the basis of the semiotic phenomenological connections to what he calls the "rhetorical branch of linguistics" inherent in the embodied phenomena of

human communication. Roman Osipovich Jakobson's nine volume Selected Writings began publication in 1962, but contains many publications from the 1950s and 1960s that define the discipline of Communicology, most notably his famous model of communication in 1956, published in final revised version in 1960 as recorded in the Selected Writings reprint of "Linguistics and Poetics". Readers are cautioned that this essay was written in 1956, revised in both 1959 and 1960, hence the Selected Writings version is definitive.

6. Communicology in the 1970s

Clarity of usage as between "communication theory" and "information theory" in the 1960s was not soon achieved, although a serious effort was made at the First World Congress on Communication Science held in Berlin in 1977 following upon the 1976 publication of Joseph Devito's *Communicology: An Introduction to the Study of Communication*. Following the 1972 publication in *Scientific American* of "Verbal Communication" by Roman Jakobson, Communicology is now clearly distinguished from "information theory" on the ground that communicology studies the full range of semiotic levels in discourse, i.e., the semantic (meaning), syntactic (patterning), and pragmatic (practicing) forms of discourse. By comparison, information theory (now called signal theory) is concerned only with the syntactic parameters of physical signal systems (informatics), e.g., the electrical impulses that make up machine memory. In a homage to the phenomenological work in semiotics and normative logics by Charles S. Peirce and Edmund Husserl, Jakobson explicates the relationship between an Addresser who expresses (emotive function) and an Addressee who perceives (conative function) a commonly shared Message (poetic function), Code (metalinguistic function), Contact (phatic function), and Context (referential function), all operating on at least one of the four levels of discourse in a semiotic world of phenomenological experience, i.e., the Semiosphere of Yuri M. Lotman.

Given these conceptual developments, the awkward phrase "communication theorist" is replaced by Communicologist, a scientific name. The term is vigorously re-introduced by DeVito in 1978 and by Vilém Flusser (1920-1991) who first uses the name "communicology" in lectures during 1977-78 and has his mature theory published

posthumously in 1996 as *Kommunikologie*. We should note that Flusser had a special interest in media and especially photography as a communication medium in society. His influence was largely located in Germany and in Brazil where he was Professor of the Philosophy of Communication at FAAP in Sao Paulo.

7. Communicology in the 1980s

Now familiar authors had major contribution in this decade. In 1986 the editor of the international journal *Semiotica*, Thomas Sebeok, devoted a double number of the journal to the response he received after sending out a survey to describe the current state of research in semiotics on the international scene. This project occasioned a response from Richard L. Lanigan which indicated the central role Communicology would play on the future study of discourse contextualized by semiotic research. During this same period of 1986-1987, Vilém Flusser published (in English) his foundational essay “On the Theory of Communication” and thereby brought attention to his vast corpus of work on Communicology during his years in Europe and Brazil. In 1987, Lanigan’s “Foundations of Communicology as a Human Science,” (Special Series on Foundations of the Human Sciences), *The Humanistic Psychologist* vol. 15:27-37, introduced Communicology in the cognate human science discipline of Psychology.

Next came two major books that would ground Communicology in the international arena of communication research. First was Richard L. Lanigan’s *Phenomenology of Communication: Merleau-Ponty’s Thematics in Semiology and Communicology* (Duquesne University Press, 1988; Korean trans. by DuWon Lee and Kee-soon Park, 1997). Then in 1989, Mehdi Mohsenian-Rad’s book, [trans. title] *Communicology: An Innovative Definition and Model for Communication Process* (Tehran, Iran: Soroush Press, 8th Edition, 2007) became the first research report book in the Farsi language to use the disciplinary designation “Communicology”. Sections in English are: (1) “Introduction to the 8th edition” [inserted in the Farsi text], (2) Author Biography, p. 4, (3) “introduction”, p. 5, (4) “What Are the Facts about Communication?”, pp. 6-34.]

8. Communicology in the 1990s

In 1992, the theoretical and applied foundation of Communicology as a scientific discipline took firm shape with the publication of *The Human Science of Communicology: The Phenomenology of Discourse in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty* (Lanigan 1992). By 1993, the name Communicology was acknowledged worldwide by the proceedings at the First World Congress on Communication and Semiotics in Monterey, Mexico. Public use of the name in 1994 was noted in the Nieman Reports (published by the Harvard Business School) when Alfred Balk wrote a commentary piece on the state of communication research which he titled “Showdown at Communicology Gap”. That same year, Lanigan’s presidential address to the Semiotic Society of America was titled “The Postmodern Ground of Communicology: Subverting the Forgetfulness of Rationality in Language”. Major journal articles by Du-Won Lee (*Korean Journal of Journalism and Communication Studies*), Thomas F. N. Puckett (*Semiotica*), and Lanigan (*Cruzeiro Semiótico [Portugal]*) appeared in 1995. As general editor, Lester Embree, published the acclaimed *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* that contains the first ever such article on “Communicology” (by Lanigan). Near the close of the decade in 1999, Mauricio Tolosa in Chile wrote his well known *Comunicología de la Aldea Global a la Comunidad Global* (Dolmen Ediciones).

9. Communicology in the 2000s

The institutionalization of the terms Communicology and Communicologist took place in 2000 with the founding of the International Communicology Institute. The I.C.I. was founded at Southern Illinois University (Carbondale, Illinois, USA) on 7 July 2000 as the final action of the Communicology as a Human Science Conference. After the initial conference, the members of the I.C.I. created a closed Internet site [COW: Conferencing on the Web] for research and dialogue. In 2003, the COW was closed down and the ICI Collegium of Fellows approved the creation of a public access Internet site [Communicology.org] to enhance information available about the maturing international discipline of Communicology. The software for the present site (www.communicology.org) was activated in July 2009.

This decade marks an explosion of publication on Communicology by authors making connections and interconnections among the many Human Sciences. There are simply too many to summarize, however we need to note a couple of significant publications events in accord with our ongoing historical review. First in 2007, we have the publication of the 8th edition of Mehdi Mohsenian-Rad's *Communicology: An Innovative Definition and Model for Communication Process*—a demonstration of the enduring interest in the discipline! Then in 2008, Richard L. Lanigan published his article "Communicology" in the internationally definitive *International Encyclopedia of Communication* (12 vols.), ed. Wolfgang Donsbach (Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Co.; International Communication Association), vol. 8, pp. 3595-3599.

The third event was the 2008 "Special Issue: Agency and Efficacy in Communicology", eds. D. Eicher-Catt and I. Catt, *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, vol. 16, nos. 3-4, pages 119-225. This special issue marks the first full edition of a journal devoted to Communicology. All of the contributors are Fellows of the International Communicology Institute. The Table of Contents suggests the diversity of applied research; Introduction, Deborah Eicher-Catt and Isaac Catt, "What Can It Mean to Say that Communication is 'Effective' (and for Whom) in Postmodernity?", pp. 119-121. Intrapersonal Communicology, Frank Macke, "Intrapersonal Communicology: Reflection, Reflexivity, and Relational Consciousness in Embodied Subjectivity", pp. 122-148; and, Eric E. Peterson, "My Body Lies Over the Keyboard: Agency and Efficacy in Weblog Storytelling", pp. 149-163. Interpersonal Communicology, Corey Anton, "Agency and Efficacy in Interpersonal Communication: Particularity as Once-Occurrence and Noninterchangeability", pp. 164-183. Social Communicology, Andrew R. Smith, "Violence and the Arts of Resistance: An Expedition in Critical Communicology", pp. 184-210. Cultural Communicology, Igor E. Klyukanov, "A Communicology of Culture: Handle with Care", pp. 211-225.

Research conferences were also an important development in this decade. The International Communicology Institute was, as mentioned already, founded at the "Communicology as a Human Science Conference", June 12 to July 7, 2000 at Southern Illinois University. It was

followed by “Cultural Constructions of Technology and Human Relations: Healthy and Unhealthy, Strange and Familiar Bodies” at Brock University, 8 to 9 July, 2002 at St. Catharines, Canada. The third meeting was “The Signs, Signing, Signage” 19 to 23 July, 2004 at Bemidji State University, Minnesota, USA. Following the practice of alternating the venue between the USA and an international site, the fourth conference “Language Beyond Power” was hosted in Denmark by the Centre for Philosophy and Science Studies, Aalborg University, 26 June to 1 July, 2006.

It is important to note that the I.C.I. has a number of affiliated research centers who assist in organizing program panels on Communicology at various international conferences and meetings. In a typical year four or five such programs are organized in addition to the regular biennial summer seminar and professional development conferences hosted by I.C.I. For example, the Fifth ICI Summer Symposium and Professional Development Conference will be in Silesia, Poland hosted by the Department of Linguistic Semiotics and Communicology, Philological School of Higher Education, Wrocław, Poland, Summer, 2011. The principal organizer is Zdzisław Wąsik, and I.C.I. Fellow and Regional Coordinator for Europe.

10. Communicology in the 2010s

Since this article appears just as the decade begins, the development of Communicology is yet to be fully discovered. Nonetheless, there are positive signs. The International Communicology Institute continues to grow with a membership of nearly 150 Fellows and Scholars from all over the world. There are many organized initiatives that promote the enduring presence of the discipline of Communicology. The best example of these efforts is Grupo Hacia una Comunicología Posible (GUCOM), [Group Toward a Possible Communicology] at the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México under the leadership of Jesús Galindo Cáceres and Tanius Karam Cádenas and their impressive website: (comunicologia-possible.iespana.es/). Also of note is the effort at conference organizing by the Canadian Communicology Research Group (CCRG) at Brock University, St. Catharines, Canada led by Maureen Connolly and Thomas D. Craig.

At least one major book is already in press for this decade. Scheduled for early 2010 is *Communicology: The New Science of Embodied Discourse*, ed. Isaac E. Catt and Deborah Eicher-Catt (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickson University Press). There are many notable contributors to this volume writing on a variety of communicological topics. Let point out that the book includes a major taxonomy article by me entitled "The Verbal and Nonverbal Codes of Communicology: The Foundation of Interpersonal Agency and Efficacy".

11. Looking Ahead to the 2022 Centennial

Because the “future is now”, those of us Communicologists who believe in the intellectual integrity of Edmund Husserl’s project to study “transcendental sociological phenomenology having reference to a manifest multiplicity of conscious subjects communicating with one another” are committed to advancing the human science discipline of Communicology. Nearly a hundred years of progressive, systematic and systemic research are present in the work we do, be it theoretical or applied. We understand the definition of this intellectual movement because our research has demonstrated it: Communicology is the science of human communication.

For us, Communicology is the critical study of discourse and practice, especially the expressive body as mediated by the perception of cultural signs and codes. It uses the methodology of semiotic phenomenology in which the expressive body discloses cultural codes, and cultural codes shape the perceptive body—an ongoing, dialectical, complex helix of twists and turns constituting the reflectivity, reversibility, and reflexivity of consciousness and experience. Communicology theoretically and practically engages in the description, reduction, and interpretation of the transdisciplinary understanding of cultural phenomena. The scientific research result is description (rather than prediction) in which validity and reliability are logic constructs based in the necessary and sufficient conditions of discovered systems (codes), both eidetic (based in consciousness) and empirical (based in experience). The methodology is inherently heuristic (semiotic) and recursive (phenomenology) as a logic in the tradition of Ernst Cassirer, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Edmund Husserl—the forebears of Communicology.

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<http://www.communicology.org/content/definition-communicology>

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² All references in the present article will be found online and annotated at: <http://www.communicology.org/content/definition-communicology>