

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

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Communication elements are centered on the message. The character is a component of message structure and hence of the message expressiveness. The broadcast message depends on a televised network, thus making it “movable” in the most remote places. The TV message makes television to get specific functions.

Elements of mass communication are:

- source;
- coding process;
- message;
- channel;
- decoding process;
- receiver;
- feedback;
- noise.

The source may be an individual, group or organization. A letter to the address of a newsroom, a spontaneous protest at the Employment Agency or a senator’s press conference are examples of traditional sources of communicators in the field of mass communication. The sources depend on communication skills. They may or may not know the receptors. The source initiates the process of mass communication from an idea, and wants to convey it into another entity. The coding procedure refers to all procedures through which a source passes by to be perceived by the senses. If phone, radio and television coding is done by wireless means.

The message is the reporter’s work put on paper. The message is the real product that the source encodes it. In mass communication messages are public. Messages can be simple or complicated, cheap or expensive. As Laurențiu Șoitu stated, the message consists of a set of

signs. “A piece of information is only what comes from outside and changes the ambience of the receiver, so only if there is such a reorganization as reception we can talk about information that ultimately is given by the new brought message or the amount of unforeseeable”¹.

The channel is the way the message reaches the receiver. Broadly speaking, the term channel is used to designate an organization of the television media. The term channel (BBC1 or M6 etc.) is never replaced in the international standard terminology by the term ‘post’, although an inadequate term so used in Romanian. In the international scientific language, the term ‘item’ is used only for receivers (radio, TV). “It is an inappropriate expression to say TVR or Pro TV station. It is correct to say: TVR1 channel, ProTV channel”².

Decoding is the process by which the message is understood by the receiver and it is the opposite of the encoding process. This means to translate and interpret physical messages that arrive in a form that has a meaning for the receiver. Reading a book means decoding a message. If you listen to the radio while reading the newspaper two messages are simultaneously decoded – the first referring to hearing and the other to visual. As Joseph R. Dominick noted “Both people and machines can be considered decoders”³.

The receiver is considered the “final goal”. One of the basic features that distinguish mass communication from other forms of communication is the public. At first sight, the audience may appear homogeneous but studies have revealed that its members differ in intelligence, age, education etc. Joseph R. Dominick points

out that the members of the public remain anonymous to one another. "The audience is spread over a large geographical area and the source and receiver are not in the immediate vicinity". But if the receiver chooses not to participate in the message, the message is not received⁴.

Feedback is the answer that can be positive or negative and the receiver can become a new source. This refers to those responses that alter the receptor's sources and subsequently represents the reverse process of communication. Feedback can be quick or delayed.

Specialists in television receive much attention to noise in relation to the channel. Communications experts define noise as the interference in the way of transmitting the message. Too much noise may prevent the message to reach destination.

In a study on science communication Gheorghe-Ilie Fârte chose as a model a press release of a public TV station. The first contact, as viewer was that with the presenters. These broadcast the press release in a montage in which they found comments, statements, interviews etc. of some characters that have been the object of the news. At the end of the show it is found that those who made materials are not announcers. The receptors of the speech acts are the viewers, but the issuers of the messages are more difficult to identify. The author finds that the issuer is a *sui generis* person composed of editors and presenters, employees or not of the credible television station, and the broadcast messages bear the seal of that channel.

Although dispersed, the receptors are in a relationship of solidarity, without being aware of it. They are the public, or audience. "The volume and structure of this new *sui generis* people are rigorously evaluated by the TV channels in order to determine its main characteristics, so that the addressed messages to suit any expectations. Like any service provider, television stations survive only if they form a loyal target audience, immune to the media market turmoil" Gheorghe-Ilie Fârte finds that the issuer and the receiver are heterogeneous people⁵. The issuers that address a wide audience are forced to make concessions

when they have a message. One would be the use of terms which ultimately can lead to the distortion of real information. Another aspect highlighted by the author is that naive receptors can form the belief that if they understand the messages they are already connoisseurs of the popular scientific theory.

Gheorghe-Ilie Fârte concludes on mass communication:

- the issuer and the receiver are *sui generis* people made up of several factors;
- the issued messages by the media posts that do not reach receptors are wasted;
- the quality of the technical components of the transmission channels are in close correlation with mass communication;
- the communication situation is a complex act;
- the retrospective of the receptors is limited, the data about communication quality is only obtained *post factum*.

THE AUDIOVISUAL MESSAGE

Communication elements are centered on the message. When we speak, our speech represents the message. Its content can be addressed by one person or to millions of people. Mass communication messages break the boundaries of interpersonal communication. They are built and influenced by market laws and media product; in this case the message behaves just like a commodity. As regards the audiovisual message, it has two distinct parts: picture and sound. Patrick Charaudeau in "Media and information" states that "the raw material of television is the image and word. Television is picture and word, word and image. "Not only is the image that sometimes denounces the manipulation effects, but the picture and the word is the solidarity in a television, the structure of the meaning depending on both elements"⁶.

To ensure expressiveness: the setting, what we see at a time on the screen passes through the cockpit assembly. The installation represents all those binding staff procedures and there is an element that acts upon the receiver. Recording an instant action of the framework as well as

that of the development of the assembly, we find that the cinematic language elements are actually focused. All the ways by which the film expressive language are parts of the broadcasting message giving to it the qualities that have imposed it in the competition with other means of mass communication. The setting/framework decreases or enlarges the view, approaching or enlarging the plot, choosing the fragment of reality to be seen at a time; simultaneously, the angulation opts for a certain angle, the most expressive of shooting, and the movement of the device has that piece of static or dynamic reality through that camera movement considered to be the best for fixing the depicted moment.

The character is a component of message structure and hence of the message expressiveness. The explanation is simple: the character brings all actor's art (gestures, expressive body movements, expressive eyes, etc.), as well as the ability to characterize and suggest the relationships between characters or of the character's relationship with the world that is part of the oriented framework. The environmental arts, costumes, make-up and especially the light (all together form the framework design) complete the arsenal of the coated image. In television the light is a key factor of expression, of atmosphere (both to external frameworks, such as where the sunlight at sunrise and sunset or the lights and shadows allow extraordinary effects as well as to the staff inside, where light "puts itself" in particular). Moreover: sometimes the light can become a background, filling the absence of objects without much loss in terms of framework expressiveness, if the game of light and darkness is well mastered. The assembly with specific procedures inherited from the film art and with special effects produced electronically by computer in the assembly booth adds to the parts of the filmed images. Its specific action causes the atmosphere; the power of suggestion of the image sometimes imprints the rhythm and even tells through the use of the ellipse. This action of expression is exerted by monitoring the recipient of a suite of frames. The picture ends with the alternative depiction of the footage: the video presenter, which means the same. The framework is static and extended far beyond the static limits

of the practiced filmed images, but some of the described components are also found here with all the consequences in terms of message expressiveness. So, we meet again in the phrase "video presenter" the art of acting, the ambient arts with the entire framework and angulation. Hence, a first explanation of why the uncovered news in footage on-site has another impact than the newspaper text that communicates the same information, the information is kept, but the message is changed, is nuanced and increases its own power by everything is compounded after its change into the text entrusted to the TV message. The word is used in off or synchronous in video, spoken, read, rich in nuances, through the persuasive power of an actor art (the expressive and nuanced utterance is one of the most important weapons of performing art). The word-voice is accompanied and complemented by the on-site noise (background noise), by the musical soundtrack (rarely seen on the news but very often used in reports), or special effects added to the soundtrack installation (generics, jingles, head-lines). The word is sometimes found in the audiovisual message structure as well as written text, not necessarily complementary to the accompanying image on the screen. During the transmission of sports events (football or tennis matches) an insert of the text without off voice crossing the screen (crawling) may announce the result of other sporting event held thousands of kilometers away at the same time. In the "Audio-visual Rhetoric" book, Laurențiu Șoitu reads: "In television the word is the one that opens the perspective. There is an internal dynamic of the show given by the movement of ideas, emotions and characters acquired by the word art". The author notes that the text may have a role to generalize, to translate, to interpret, and to explain the contrast⁷.

Because of the moving image, the television manages to transform the information-publishing messages in audiovisual performances and to give the reception of these messages a double determination: logical-rational and emotional-affective. So the publishing message reaches viewers with novelty, accuracy, timeliness characteristic to media, but also the power to influence that sensitivity of the viewer that

provides the ability to emotionally participate. So the picture is not added to the word and sound, but the element around which is structured by synthesis, a mode of communication with specific language, with specific ways of expression, but also with known limits. "It is clear that television rises. In part this was already done by the radio, but the effect of awakening is violent and, moreover, different. To wake up with the help of the word (radio) cannot be compared to the waking caused by the whole world visibility that potentially visible reached the homes of all. Until the twentieth century, three quarters of mortals stood locked in houses and slept in their villages (more than in their towns). Now we are all six billion, more or less awake or wake. "It's a huge change whose explosive impact cannot be measured yet"⁸.

The fact that information-publishing message is transmitted through a scene does not mean that television automatically goes into Arts, gaining its features and being under the laws of theater or film.

The broadcast message depends on a televised network, thus making it "movable" in the most remote places. It can also be received by the illiterate or the persons for whom reading requires a special effort (pre-school children, elderly, and people with disabilities).

The TV message makes television to get specific functions. Gaining public attention is the final target, the success in media and then the

message goes into the background. In response to the communicators' approach, the public attaches to certain programs and allocates more time to media.

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Endnotes:

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- 2 Ioan Dragan, *Comunicarea paradigme și teorii*, vol. [2] Ed. Rao, București, 2007, p. 288.
- 3 Dominick Joseph R. *Ipostazele comunicării de masă*, Ed. Comunicare.ro, București, 2009, p. 5.
- 4 *Ibidem*, p. 12.
- 5 Gheorghe-Ilie Fârte, 2002, *Existență Cunoaștere Comunicare*, Ed. Univ. „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, p. 234.
- 6 Patrick Charaudeau, *Media și informația*, Ed. Antet, București, 2004, p. 90.
- 7 Laurențiu Șoitu, *Retorică audio-vizuală*, Ed. Cronica, Iași, 1993, p. 99.
- 8 Giovanni Sartori, *Homo videns – Imbecilizarea prin televiziune*, Ed. Humanias, București, 2006, p. 31.